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SKETCHES OF SERMONS.



SKETCHES OF SERMONS

PREACHED IN

VARIOUS PARTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

AND

ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT.

FURNISHED BY

THEIR RESPECTIVE AUTHORS.

“So they read in the book, in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand the reading.”

NEHEMIAH viii. 8.

By James Burns

VOL. I.

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P R E F A C E.

IN different periods of the world various attempts have been made to elucidate the Scriptures; sometimes by classical and critical disquisitions, or by illustrations of ancient customs and manners; at others, by extensive voluminous commentaries; but more frequently by homilies and sermons, when certain texts, or portions of the sacred volume, have been selected; and doctrinal, experimental and practical truths deduced from them: and considering the incalculable advantages of religion, and how deeply the eternal interests of mankind are involved in its propagation, we need not be surprised to learn, that men of the most exalted minds, the deepest piety, and most profound erudition, have zealously engaged in the laudable exercise of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, and in labouring to make manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place. To decide, with absolute certainty, on the most success-

ful mode of doing this, requires a greater acuteness of discernment, and a more extensive knowledge of men and things, than the authors of these volumes give themselves credit for possessing. Different truths are suited to different capacities and states; and, like various kinds of food, should be administered only in such proportions as they can be received. There is milk for babes, and strong meat for them that are of full age; and if ever a preacher be called upon to exercise his judgment, it is in adapting his subject and style to the intellectual and moral tastes of his hearers. A great proportion of the inhabitants of England live in solitary cottages, or small villages; and our age happily abounds with *Village Sermons*, *Rural Discourses*, *Family Sermons*, and *Short Sermons*; together with skeletons or outlines of Sermons, both of ancient and modern date. That many of those publications possess considerable merit we are ready to allow, as it is far from our purpose to wish to establish the credit of our work by depreciating the productions of others; but notwithstanding the compilations of this description already before the Public, it has been suggested, that a work in a portable form, furnished by different living authors, whose modes of thinking on theological subjects have not been formed by a similar education, and whose habits of discussing evangelical subjects are peculiarly their own, was a desideratum in this department. Under the influence, therefore, of this sentiment, we

have acted in presenting the following Sketches to the public eye; an undertaking which would have been highly gratifying to us to have seen more ably executed by other hands.

We feel no hesitation to avow, that there are certain doctrines which we conceive form the basis of Christianity, and support the temple of truth. These doctrines should ever be prominent and conspicuous in all discourses designed to promote the salvation of immortal souls; and therefore, the fall of man—the divinity, atonement, and intercession of Christ—the personality and influence of the Holy Ghost—justification by faith—sanctification of heart and life—and eternal states of rewards and punishments after death, are assumed in these Sketches, as established and essential points; and although some arguments in their support and vindication are occasionally introduced, yet the general character of the work is practical; both because practical subjects are better adapted to afford variety of method, and a practical manner of treating evangelical subjects is generally most acceptable and useful.

Should any of our Readers be of opinion that we lay an undue stress on subjects of minor importance or doubtful aspect, we beg leave to say, that nothing of a polemical nature is intended, and we think no reference to such subjects occurs but that which incidentally arises from the doctrines discussed. We neither propose nor desire to serve a party interest

by the publication of this work; but, under the fullest conviction that Christianity contains a sovereign remedy for all the moral diseases of human nature, we have aimed at declaring the truth, and the whole truth, as it is in JESUS.

In consequence of the imperfection of the human understanding, and the brevity of human life, all means of useful information become highly important; and theological, as well as scientific knowledge, is augmented by reciprocal communication. Sacred Truth is the perfection of beauty, and must be admired by all who attentively survey her unparalleled excellence: but though her admirers are numerous, yet looking at her in different directions, and through various mediums, they may all find full employment—in portraying the dignity of her aspect—the symmetry of her form—the blessings dispensed by her hand—the flowers which spring up at her feet—the graces which compose her train—or the demons which retire at her approach. Happy do we deem ourselves in having the honour of ministering at her altars, watching daily at her gates, and waiting at the posts of her doors; and we would fain indulge a hope, that this humble attempt to illustrate some of the excellencies of Divine Truth, will neither be unacceptable, nor unprofitable, to those who have but lately entered the school of the Christian ministry. There are many Ministers, so venerable through age, so distinguished by abilities, and so honoured by their extensive and useful la-

hours, that we should rejoice in sitting at their feet ; although we think that there are comparatively few public speakers, whatever may be their strength of genius or vivacity, or compass of imagination, who may not in some instances derive assistance from others in many respects their inferiors. It is not, however, for such persons that the following Sketches are designed, but for junior ministers, who have recently begun to call sinners to repentance ; and especially for those worthy and indefatigable labourers in the vineyard of our Lord, who feel an unquenchable zeal for the salvation of souls, but have not been favoured with the advantages of a liberal education ; for that education greatly contributes to improve the mind, is a fact too obvious to need proof ; most certainly these advantages never shine with greater lustre, nor answer more important purposes, than when they adorn the Christian Minister, and are consecrated to promote the glory of that God whom he serves in the Gospel of his Son. But while we most decidedly protest against that execrable maxim of the Church of Rome, that ignorance is the mother of devotion, we feel nevertheless constrained to avow, that we do not conceive classic attainments essential to the Christian ministry ; and whatever praise may be due to those who have, by their learning, paved the way to the temple of knowledge, yet men of science have not always been the most successful in preaching the Gospel to the poor : God has been pleased frequently to choose “ the foolish things

of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty: and base things of the world, and things which are despised, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." The office of preaching the Gospel has never been restricted to the learned, nor are there any specific qualifications of human origin to which the Deity has shewn himself exclusively partial; the appendages of the seedsman were never designed to add any thing to the vegetative power of the seed; nor the elegance of the vessel to the value of the treasure which it contains. Men of plain manners and sound sense, whose souls are deeply imbued with the Spirit of God, and who preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, are often made the honoured instruments of converting sinners from the error of their ways; but it is not unusual for them to labour under great embarrassment in the pulpit, principally for want of having their subjects distinctly analyzed, and their ideas naturally arranged; they perceive the different truths suggested by the text, but with the order in which they should stand, and the connection which they have with each other, they are but imperfectly acquainted; hence the truth loses much of its edge and energy; and instead of those luminous and comprehensive conceptions which a correct arrangement might have conveyed, indistinct and confused ideas occupy the minds of auditors, who frequently perceive the defects in the com-

position to which the Preacher himself does not know how to apply the remedy. It is, therefore, highly important that Ministers should not only “declare the whole counsel of God,” but be able “rightly to divide the word of truth,” by having an intimate acquaintance with their subjects, and by adopting a just and perspicuous method of arrangement, that they may be able to exhibit the grand doctrines and comprehensive duties of the Gospel, in their proper order and connection; unfold its amazing privileges, and urge all its lofty, as well as its tender motives, with fervour and pathos. Such a method, however, is not always so easily or so effectually attained by the mere efforts of our rational faculties, nor by the study of dry rules, as by a careful attention to suitable examples, and familiar modes of composition, which at once afford direction and excitement; and exemplify the best rules in the simplest and most edifying form. How far the following Sketches possess this excellence, or are calculated to promote this object, those who favour them with a perusal must judge; that our younger brethren in the ministry, to whom they are respectfully tendered, and for whose use they are specially designed, should servilely copy the schemes of others, and pass them as their own, is what we dare not recommend; as such a proceeding would too nearly resemble the conduct of the ancient prophets, who were censured by the Almighty for stealing his words, “every one from his neighbour;” and only serve to beget a habit of indo-

lence, and neglect of study ; which is a sore disgrace to a Christian Minister, who has to feed the people with knowledge, and to “bring out of his treasury things new and old.”

While we are thus desirous of aiding our junior brethren in the method and arrangements of their compositions, we would most solicitously exhort them to be upon their guard against a snare to which they will be unavoidably exposed, which has often proved highly detrimental to the spiritual improvement and public usefulness of young ministers ; we mean that of mistaking the means for the end ; substituting knowledge for piety, and supposing that the attainment of clear conceptions of their subject, is the sole qualification for preaching the Gospel. It is not an uncommon case, for a preacher to be so much alive to the arrangement and filling up of his discourse, and so employed in calling into exercise his invention, judgment, and memory, as even to leave his affections entirely out of the work. He may be so full of divisions, and subdivisions ; of definitions, illustrations and proofs ; as totally to overlook his own personal interest in the subject ; and even to neglect fervent prayer to God, and an implicit dependence on the HOLY SPIRIT, whose special aids are indispensable for all who would labour successfully in the word and doctrine. He may be more anxious to excel in what may be termed the mechanism of a sermon, than in the spirit and power of it ; and to win the admiration of his hearers, rather than

their souls. His skeleton may be well formed, "bone to his bone," and fastened with sinews, and covered with flesh and skin, so as to exhibit to the view a most exact and perfect symmetry; and yet it may be *dry*, as those in Ezekiel's vision, which had no breath in them, and no influence from God to make them live. He may be sound in his doctrines, cogent in his arguments, and practical in his applications; in fine, he may be a popular, and, in some respects, a useful preacher, by guarding the outworks of Christianity, walking about Zion, telling her towers, marking well her bulwarks, and considering her palaces; but into her courts he may seldom enter, and to the fire that burns on her altars, never approach; cold and frigid, his soul remains unaffected by the solemn and awful realities which he constantly urges upon others.

Few evils are more to be deprecated than this, as it immediately and inevitably induces a state of habitual formality; a mere official piety, which, while it preserves all the exterior form of evangelical religion, is nearly, if not wholly, destitute of its power. The remote consequences to which it frequently leads are too obvious and too dreadful, to need any distinct specification; but supposing no scandalous fall should be the final result, is not the ministry of such persons comparatively inefficacious? Does God put honour upon them, by making them the happy instruments of turning many to righteousness? Is his word in their mouths like a fire, and like a hammer, that breaketh the rock in

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pieces? Where are the fruits of their living “epistles known and read of all men?” Alas! concerning such men, we may adopt the pointed and significant language of the Redeemer, and say, “Verily they have their reward.”

The great subjects of the Gospel ministry are all so sacred and awful; so intimately connected with the Divine glory, and the eternal destinies of men; that it seems a species of profanation even to speculate upon them, without applying them to the heart; and for a man to employ them merely as topics for the display of his logical or rhetorical abilities, whilst his feelings are in reality no more excited by them than they would be by the solution of a problem in Euclid; is a desecration that cannot fail to be highly offensive to HIM, who is of “purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” Whatever abilities such a person may possess, or whatever study he may have bestowed upon his sermon; he is ill prepared for the pulpit, in comparison of him, who concentrates all the rays which illuminate his understanding in the focus of his heart, where they enkindle the most ardent sentiments of zeal for the glory of God, and of love to the souls of men. Grasping his subject in all its extent, and wrought up by a sense of its vast importance, to the highest pitch of mental and devotional energy; he will come forth to the people, to impart, not the Gospel of God only, but his own soul also, which he throws, as it were, into every expression and every gesture:—

—————Then nature speaks
Her genuine language ; and the words of men,
Big with the very motion of their souls,
Declare with what accumulated force
Th' impetuous nerve of feelings urges on
The native weight and energy of things.

But while we dedicate the following Sketches of Sermons to our junior brethren in the ministry, we do not wish to be understood that they are designed exclusively for them ; as we hope that, under the influence of the Divine blessing, they may be rendered useful to many well-regulated families, and pious individuals in private life. It affords us high gratification to know, that the sacred Scriptures are not only more extensively circulated than in any former period of the world, but that the practice of reading them in the family and in the closet obtains more generally among Christians ; and as these Sketches are arranged according to the order in which their respective texts stand in the Bible—as the subjects explained are practical and important—as the observations are plain and laconic, and may be read without any considerable encroachment on the time allotted for other domestic or personal duties ; we trust that this pleasing anticipation is not founded in vanity, nor marked by arrogance.

Having thus stated the sentiments we entertain, and the motives by which we are actuated, in presenting this work to the Public, we now leave it in the hands

of those who may honour it with a perusal. We offer no apology for the doctrines it contains—we entertain no anxiety for its fate—we court no favour that christian candour is not ever ready to bestow:—

But all is in His hand whose praise we seek,
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation prosper—even ours.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

No.	TITLE.	TEXT.	PAGE.
I.	The frailty of human nature.	Genesis iii. 19.	1
II.	Walking with God.	Genesis v. 24.	4
III.	God's claim on our obedience.	Exodus v. 2.	8
IV.	Israel's retrospect.	Deut. viii. 2.	12
V.	Divine correction.	Deut. viii. 5.	15
VI.	The troubles of sin.	Josh. vii. 25.	19
VII.	Holy ardour.	Psalms lxiii. 8.	22
VIII.	Divine worship.	Psalms lxxxiv. 1. 2.	26
IX.	The city of God.	Psalms lxxxvii. 3.	29
X.	The admirable nature of the Divine Oracles.	Psalms cxix. 129.	33
XI.	Acknowledging God.	Prov. iii. 6.	37
XII.	The way to heaven.	Isa. xxxv. 8—10.	40
XIII.	Trust in the Lord recommended.	Isa. xl. 27—31.	44
XIV.	The sufferings of Christ.	Isa. liii. 10, 11.	47
XV.	The kingdom of the Messiah.	Jerem. xxiii. 5.	51
XVI.	Sinners returning to God.	Jerem. i. 4, 5.	55
XVII.	First Husband.	Hosea ii. 7.	58
XVIII.	The gift of the Holy Spirit.	Luke xi. 13.	61
XIX.	Spiritual declension.	Luke xxii. 54.	65
XX.	The new birth.	John iii. 7.	69
XXI.	The water of life.	John iv. 14.	72
XXII.	Christ the fountain of living water.	John vii. 37, 38.	75
XXIII.	The important question.	John ix. 35.	78
XXIV.	The friendship of Christ.	John xv. 14.	81
XXV.	Christ a friend.	John xv. 15.	85
XXVI.	Separation from the world.	John xv. 19.	88
XXVII.	Evangelical preaching.	Acts ii. 37.	91
XXVIII.	Paul's discourse before Felix.	Acts xxiv. 25.	95
XXIX.	The enmity of the carnal mind.	Rom. viii. 7.	98
XXX.	Nonconformity to the world.	Rom. xii. 2.	102
XXXI.	Divine wisdom displayed in the Gospel.	1 Cor. i. 21.	105

No.	TITLE.	TEXT.	PAGE.
XXXII.	Purchased service.	1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.	109
XXXIII.	Paul's consolation.	2 Cor. xii. 9.	112
XXXIV.	The believer crucified with Christ, and Christ living in the believer.	Gal. ii. 20.	115
XXXV.	Sinners brought nigh by the blood of Christ.	Ephes. ii. 13.	119
XXXVI.	The Christian calling.	Ephes. iv. 1.	122
XXXVII.	Fruits of righteousness.	Phil. i. 11.	125
XXXVIII.	The Gospel revealed.	Coloss. i. 27.	129
XXXIX.	The faithful saying.	1 Tim. i. 15.	132
XL.	The divine authority of the Scrip- tures.	2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.	135
XLI.	Ministering spirits.	Heb. i. 14.	139
XLII.	The great salvation.	Heb. ii. 3.	142
XLIII.	The incarnation and priestly office of Christ.	Heb. ii. 17.	145
XLIV.	The throne of grace.	Heb. iv. 15, 16.	149
XLV.	The way to wisdom.	James i. 5.	152
XLVI.	The law of liberty.	James i. 25.	155
XLVII.	God's adopting love.	1 John iii. 1.	159
XLVIII.	The propitiation.	1 John iv. 10.	163
XLIX.	An address to the fallen.	Rev. ii. 5.	166
L.	The glorious day of eternity.	Rev. xxii. 5.	170
LI.	Noah's obedience.	Genesis vi. 22.	173
LII.	The house of God and the gate of heaven	Genesis xxviii. 17.	177
LIII.	The Sabbath.	Exodus xx. 8.	181
LIV.	Following the multitude prohibited.	Exodus xxiii. 2	185
LV.	Caleb's character.	Numbers xiv. 24.	189
LVI.	Joshua's resolution.	Joshua xxiv. 15.	192
LVII.	The evil of indecision and the means of renouncing it.	1 Kings xviii. 21,	197
LVIII.	Manasseh's repentance.	2 Chrn. xxxiii. 12, 13	202
LIX.	Pardoning mercy.	Nehemiah ix. 17.	206
LX.	God's power over the heart.	Job xxiii. 16.	210
LXI.	The Divine regard to man.	Psalms viii. 3, 4.	213
LXII.	The government of the tongue.	Psalms xxxix. 1.	217
LXIII.	Prayer.	Psalms lv. 17.	221
LXIV.	A reward for the righteous.	Psalms lviii. 11.	224
LXV.	The extension of the Work of God abroad, intimately connected with its revival at home.	Psalms lxvii. 1, 2.	228
LXVI.	The Christian conducted to glory.	Psalms lxxiii. 24.	232
LXVII.	The best pursuit.	Psalms cxix. 2.	236
LXVIII.	The nature and consequences of co- vering sin, and the advantages of confessing and forsaking it.	Prov. xxviii. 13.	240

No.	TEXT.	TITLE.	PAGE.
LXIX.	The certainty of death.	Eccles. ix. 5.	243
LXX.	Young persons exhorted to remember their Creator.	Eccles. xii. 1.	246
LXXI.	The feast for all people.	Isaiah xxv. 6, 7.	250
LXXII.	The book of the Lord.	Isaiah xxxiv. 16.	254
LXXIII.	The difference between trusting in the creature and the Creator.	Jer. xvii. 6, 7, 8.	258
LXXIV.	Scriptural conversion.	Ezekiel xi. 19, 20.	261
LXXV.	The fountain opened.	Zeechariah xiii. 1.	266
LXXVI.	Rest for the weary and heavy laden	Matthew xi. 21.	269
LXXVII.	The value of the soul.	Matthew xvi. 26.	274
LXXVIII.	What we ought to think of Christ.	Matthew xxii. 42.	277
LXXIX.	Effectual preservatives from sin.	Matthew xxvi. 41.	288
LXXX.	Repentance.	Mark vi. 12.	285
LXXXI.	The transfiguration of Christ.	Luke ix. 28—35.	288
LXXXII.	The character and end of a sensualist.	Luke xii. 20, 21.	293
LXXXIII.	The dying penitent.	Luke xxiii. 39—43.	297
LXXXIV.	Moral gravity the origin of infidelity.	John iii. 19.	301
LXXXV.	The Redeemer's complaint,	John v. 40.	305
LXXXVI.	The works of the day.	John ix. 4.	309
LXXXVII.	Christ the light of the world.	John xii. 46.	313
LXXXVIII.	The interesting inquiry.	John xiv. 22.	317
LXXXIX.	The pouring out of God's Spirit.	Acts ii. 17.	320
XC.	A knowledge of time;—a sketch for new year's day.	Romans xiii. 11.	324
XCI.	The riches of the Christian.	1 Cor. iii. 21—23.	329
XCII.	The celebration of the Lord's Supper a Christian duty.	1 Cor. v. 7, 8.	332
XCIII.	Beholding the glory of the Lord.	2 Cor. iii. 18.	336
XCIV.	The Father's charge.	Ephesians vi. 4.	340
XCV.	St. Paul's grateful remembrance of the piety, and his confident hope of the final salvation of the Philippians.	Philippians i. 3,—7.	343
XCVI.	St. Paul's love to the Philippians, and his prayer on their behalf, considered and explained.	Philippians i. 8—11.	347
XCVII.	The good warfare.	1 Timothy i. 18, 19.	351
XCVIII.	The way of salvation.	Titus iii. 15.	354
XCIX.	The day of God.	2 Peter iii. 12.	357
C.	Growing in grace.	2 Peter iii. 18.	361



SKETCHES OF SERMONS.

I. THE FRAILITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

GEN. iii. 19.

“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

How dreadful—how rapid—is the havoc of sin! Turn only to the preceding chapters, and you behold man proceeding from the hand of his MAKER, holy, righteous, wise, good, very good; shining in the divine image,—highly exalted,—crowned with glory, honour, and immortality. Here the image is lost,—the crown is fallen,—the glory is departed; and this once highly-exalted creature is degraded to the dust,—condemned to the grave. We are all implicated, (Heb. ix. 27.) Our doom is inevitable:—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” But our very sentence *may* become a warning; and may, through divine grace, lead us so to think on—*The frailty of our nature*, and *The certainty of our end*,—as, *Rightly to estimate human life; and properly to improve it.*

I. THE FRAILITY OF OUR NATURE. This may be inferred from—*Its origin*;—*its liability to injury*; and *its tendency to dissolution.*

Its origin. However glorious our MAKER, however exquisite the human body, GOD made that body of *the dust of the earth*. And whatever principle, calculated to render it immortal, might have been infused when GOD breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life (Heb. *lives*); and however such a principle might have rendered the frail materials imperishable; or however the fruit of the tree of life might have preserved them;—sin having

entered,—“The dust shall return to the earth as it was, when the spirit returns to God who gave it.” Eccl. xii. 7.

Its liability to injury. No sooner are we born, than fierce diseases wait to attack us,—blasts are ready to destroy the tender plant, Job xiv. 2. If it be not destroyed, frequently, how is it injured—irreparably injured! Can youth repel these attacks any more than childhood? Can the man in his full vigour repel them? Behold him *once* vigorous! What hath made this change? Accidents, so called, may befall a man at any age, time, or place. View the injuries sustained from these! All the elements attack us; and can nature, frail human nature, resist? Do all these spare? yet

Its tendency to dissolution proves its frailty. Behold the ravages of time! Human nature has its morning, noon, and night; its spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Could the man, glorying in his might, repel the advance of years, or keep off the infirmities of old age? See! the legs totter,—the hands tremble,—the eyes grow dim,—the hearing fails; the earthly tabernacle is dissolving; repairs can no longer keep it together;—“Dust thou art.” How frail is human nature! (See Ps. ciii. 14, 15, and xc. 5, 6, and xxxix. 4, 5,)—“and unto dust thou shalt return.” Hence let us consider,

II. THE CERTAINTY OF OUR END.

We are born to die. Our first breath is so much of nature exhausted. The first hour we live is an approach to death: infancy is a step,—youth is a stride,—mature age is a great advance,—declining age is a near approach,—and old age is the foot lifted to step into the grave, Eccl. xii. 1, 7.

The perpetual exit of mortals confirms this. Methuselah died. And since the flood, only a few have gone beyond a hundred years. All ranks die;—the majestic, the courtly road which kings and statesmen pass over,—that in which men of science and of letters walk,—that which the warrior traverses,—that which is trodden by the tyrant or the slave,—all alike lead to the regions of the dead, and terminate in “the house appointed for all living,” Job xxx. 23, and xxi. 26; Eccl. iii. 20. No power, no skill, no counsel can be successful against death:—for, besides all other reasons why we must die,

God hath decreed it,—hath declared it, Job xxxiv. 15; Ps. xc. 3; Isaiah li. 6; Heb. ix. 27.

But why do I try to confirm a truth so self-evident? Not indeed because it admits of any doubt; but because it is difficult to fix the mind of man on the subject; and because I would prepare *your* minds for the following IMPROVEMENT. O that you may be led, from the foregoing considerations, rightly to estimate, and properly to improve, human life!

What is *human life*? A mere temporary state of existence, Job vii. 1; Ps. xc. 10, and cxliv. 4; 1 Pet. i. 17. A short and an uncertain duration of being, Job xiv. 1, and xvi. 22; Jam. iv. 14. And yet, everlasting consequences depend on our conduct during our passage through this short, this uncertain state, Rom. viii. 13; Gal. vi. 7, 8; Matt. xxv. 31—46; John v. 28, 29.

Can men really suppose that the principal business of life consists in the acquirement of worldly knowledge?—the pursuit of learned trifles?—the attainment of human glory, honour, power?—the accumulation of wealth?—the gratification of bodily appetites? So the conduct of almost all around would tell us.

But hear, O thou *frail*, thou *dying mortal*, hear the word of the Lord, Matt. xvi. 26; Psalm xlix. 8; Job xxxvi. 18, 19; Jer. ix. 23; Mic. vi. 8; and *learn properly to estimate, and wisely to improve, human life.*

Think on the immortal inhabitants, for which these bodies are only the tabernacles, 2 Cor. v. 1, 4. We have souls that can never die, (Matt. x. 28); capable of knowing and serving GOD;—and whose services GOD demands, Dent. vi. 5. Souls for which a great work must be done, or we must perish, John iii. 3.

The great business of life is—

To know and serve GOD, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; 1 Tim. iv. 8; Philip. iii. 8; Eccles. xii. 13. Can any thing be more important, more rational, more excellent?

To seek and obtain salvation for our souls. Alas! in what an awful situation is fallen man! *Guilty* before God, Rom. iii. 19—23. *Polluted* with sin, Ps. li. 5; Eph. ii. 3. *Condemned*, John iii. 18. *Exposed* to the “damnation of hell,” Ps. ix. 7; Matt. xxiii. 33; 2 Thess. i. 7—9. O! What a work to be accomplished! and all during this short, this uncertain life! But for JESUS our SAVIOUR,—but for salvation by

grace through faith,—but for this god-like, this expeditious method of salvation, we were all everlastingly undone!

We should always be living in reference to death and eternity. What a momentous period will the hour of death be! And what an everlasting and unchangeable state of bliss or woe will follow! See Rev. xxii. 11, 12; Job xxx. 23; Matt. xxiv. 44; 2 Pet. iii. 11, 14; Philip. iii. 11.

Dust thou art. What a lesson for the *proud* and the *haughty*!

Unto dust shalt thou return. What a corrective for the *busy* and the *gay*! What a warning for all!

GAMMA.

II. WALKING WITH GOD.

GEN. v. 24.

“And Enoch walked with God.”

OF this excellent man but little is recorded in the word of God; four verses in this chapter, one in the epistle to the Hebrews, and two in the epistle of Jude, contain all that we learn respecting him. These records inform us,

1. *That he was the seventh from Adam*; or his descendant of the seventh generation. So the Apostle pronounces him, Jude 14.

Hence he must have been cotemporary with Adam, and probably enjoyed familiar converse with him during more than two hundred years; for Enoch was born in the six hundred and twenty-second year of the world, and Adam did not die till the year nine hundred and thirty. And converse with one who could, and no doubt did, so fully inform him respecting the creation, fall and redemption of man, must have been a great privilege. He was also favoured with the good examples of the Patriarchs; of

Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaheel, and Jared, his pious father, whose piety may be fairly presumed from the name he gave his son; for the name Enoch signifies to instruct, initiate, or dedicate; and intimates that Jared had dedicated him to God from his birth, and was concerned to train him up in the way he should go. Thus in Enoch God's word was exemplified, Prov. xxii. 6. But amidst these advantages, he also witnessed the prevalence of ungodliness in the earth; for he lived when men both acted and spoke wickedly against God: these he faithfully warned, saying, "Behold," &c, Jude 14, 15. Hence we learn,

2. *That he was a prophet*: He "prophesied." This he did

By predicting general events, particularly the general judgment; and by teaching sacred truth,—reproving sin,—warning the rebellious,—and encouraging God's "saints" to hope for glory with him.

3. We also learn *that he was the pious head of a family*; "And Enoch lived," &c. v. 21, 22, of the chapter whence the text is taken. He walked with God both in his single and in his marriage state. He did not shun society to become pious, nor forsake society to practise godliness; but amidst the business and cares of a numerous growing family, he still carefully and resolutely walked with God.—This leads us to notice,

I. HIS GENERAL CHARACTER: He walked with God. Here let us consider,

1. *What walking with God supposes.* To discover this, we must observe,—All mankind are naturally fallen; in Adam, Rom. v. 18; and by their own personal transgressions, Psalm xiv. 2, 3.—Our degeneracy implies enmity of heart, and actual rebellion against God, Rom. viii. 7; Isa. i. 2; consequently, agreement with God must precede our walking with him, Amos iii. 3. This agreement must include the removal of our guilt, by God's forgiving mercy, Mic. vii. 18; and the removal of our enmity by a gracious circumcision of heart, Deut. xxx. 6; Rom. viii. 16 and v. 1, 5; 1 John iv. 19.

2. *What walking with God implies.* It must imply

Faith in God, Heb. xi. 5, 6. Faith in him as our proprietor, who has a just claim on our services, Psalm xcv. 3, 6, 7, 8; and faith in him as our Redeemer, all sufficient to bless and keep us, Gen. xvii. 1, and xv. 1.

A conformity to God's way; that way prescribed in his

word, Psalm cxix. 30. The way of communion with him through CHRIST, John xiv. 6; Heb. x. 19—22. And that way *suggested by his relations and perfections*. The way of grateful self-dedication, Rom. xii. 1; and of humble affiance, 1 Pet. v. 7.

The *habitual recollection of God's presence*, Psalm xvi. 8; Prov. iii. 6.

The *enjoyment of his manifested favour*, Heb. xi. 5; Psalm lxxxix. 15, 16. Hence observe,

3. *Some advantages which result from walking with God*
As

Guidance in difficulties, Prov. iii. 6. "He shall direct," &c. Psalm xxxii. 8. Preservation from falling, Psalm xvi. 8. Assistance in weakness, Isa. xli. 10. Comfort in afflictions, Psalm xlv. 1, and xciv. 19. And improvement in piety, Prov. iv. 18. Having observed what is implied in this good man's general character, let us, for our further instruction, consider,

II. SOME PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH IT;
Particularly

1. *The period of its commencement, and the time of its continuance.*

It *commenced* in what may be considered his *early youth*; when he had not lived the twelfth part of the then usual age of man. This shews us, that early piety is acceptable to GOD, Prov. viii. 17. Seek it, Eccl. xii. 1; for early habits are most easily formed, and most lasting, Lam. iii. 27. It *continued at least three hundred years*. This teaches us, that the pleasures of religion never cloy, Psalm lxiii. 3, 4; and that GOD's grace is sufficient for the longest pilgrimage, 2 Cor. xii. 9.

2. *The relations under which it was sustained.* The relation of—*a family governor*. Hence, we see the falsehood of three common suppositions. First, 'That solitude is necessary to piety.' This is an error of superstition; as Christians we are called to sociability, Matt. v. 14—16. Secondly, 'That religion is injurious to social duties and comforts.' This is an error of prejudice, which is confuted by many living characters, Prov. xii. 26. Thirdly, 'That we serve GOD only when we engage in acts of devotion.' This is an error of ignorance; for we also serve GOD acceptably, when we serve

mankind in obedience to him, Acts xiii. 36 ; Gal. v. 14, and vi. 2, 10. This character was also sustained by Enoch, under the relation of a—*public teacher*. From this example we learn, that teachers of others should be careful to walk with God themselves;—in domestic life, that they may engage their families in God's service, Josh. xxiv. 15;—in public life, that their labours may be blessed by God, Psalm li. 12, 13 ; Mal. ii. 6.

3. *The scenes amidst which it was preserved.* These were examples of prevailing ungodliness, when piety was generally reproached. Thus, when iniquity is general, it is our duty to be singular, Exod. xxiii. 2 ; for we are called by God to be a peculiar people, Tit. ii. 14 ; Rom. xii. 2. A resolute confession of God in the face of an opposing world, is highly pleasing to Him, Heb. xi. 5.—“He pleased God.” Num. xiv. 24. Those who honour God are honoured by Him, 1 Sam. ii. 30. This appears from,

4. *The glorious event which succeeded this holy walk :* “God took him.” He was translated body and soul to heaven, without seeing death. This removal was *gainful to him* ; it perfected his felicity. So the death of all true believers is followed by the eternal consummation of all their happiness, Phil. i. 21, 23 ; Luke xxiii. 43.

It was *honourable to God*. To his wisdom, in discriminating characters ; to his goodness, in rewarding the faithful ; and to his truth, in fulfilling his promises. So is the death of all his saints, Psalm cxvi. 15, and lviii. 11.

It was *beneficial to mankind*. It teaches mankind in all ages, that *there is another and better world reserved for the righteous* :—as the ascension of Elijah and our Lord did afterwards, Heb. xi. 16 ; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4, 5.

That *piety is extensively profitable* ; being evidently conducive to our eternal, as well as to our present welfare, 1 Tim. iv. 8.

That *the redemption of our bodies as well as our souls is certain*. For we see God able and faithful to fulfil his engagements, Hos. xiii. 14 ; Phil. iii. 21.

That *an early removal is no loss to the righteous*. For what is taken from time is added to a blissful eternity, Rev. vii. 14 —17.

And That *a sudden removal, when God appoints it, is no cause of terror to those who die in him*; for to all such characters sudden death becomes sudden glory, Rev. xiv. 13; 2 Cor. v. 8; Isa. lvii. 1, 2.

This interesting example teaches us,

1. *That to walk with God, is the common privilege of mankind*; for what Enoch did, GOD calls us to do in his word, Jer. vi. 16; Mic. vi. 8; and the grace enjoyed by him is also free for us, Rom. x. 12.

We have free access to GOD through CHRIST, Eph. ii. 18; I Pet iii. 18. And strength to walk with GOD is promised by him, Zech. x. 12.

2. *To walk with God, is the indispensable duty of mankind.* For none can dwell with GOD hereafter but such as walk with him here, Psalm v. 4, 5.

3. *To walk with God, is the highest interest of mankind.* It is the sure and only way to heaven, Psalm lxxxiv. 11. Like Enoch, set yourselves to walk with GOD:—desire it, Psalm cxix. 5;—and in GOD's strength resolve on it, Psalm cxvi. 9, 18.

ALPHA.

III. GOD'S CLAIM ON OUR OBEDIENCE.

EXOD v. 2.

“Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?”

IN the verse immediately preceding our text, we find Aaron delivering this message to Pharaoh,—“Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.” To this message, Pharaoh answers in the words before us, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go.” I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go,” These words imply, that as JEHOVAH was not an Egyptian deity, and consequently not the professed object

of Pharaoh's worship, he therefore concluded that he was under no obligation to obey JEHOVAH's voice. This conclusion teaches us, that ignorance of GOD is a most alarming evil, as it leads to daring rebellion against GOD; and this, if persisted in, must be attended with certain destruction, Prov. xxix. 1.

But the enquiry in our text, though at first employed in an avowed contempt of GOD, will admit of improvement, favourable to piety. In attempting to make this improvement under the Divine blessing, let us consider some particulars relative to GOD's voice; and his claims on our obedience to it.

1. SOME PARTICULARS RELATIVE TO GOD'S VOICE.

By the voice of GOD is meant the declaration of his will concerning mankind. Here therefore it may be proper to consider,

1. *The persons to whom he speaks—mankind.* "Unto you, O men," &c. Prov. viii. 4. He speaks to men as his *farourite* creatures, whose welfare he desires. This appears from his wish, Deut. v. 29, "O that there were," &c;—from his commands, Isa. xlv. 22; Acts xvii. 30;—his declaration, Ezek. xxxiii. 11;—his complaints, John v. 40; Matt. xxiii. 37;—and his threatenings, Prov. i, 24—26. He speaks to men as *ignorant* creatures; who need his instruction, in order that it may be well with them, Isa. lx. 2 and xlvi. 16, 17; Jer. x. 23, and xxxviii. 20. He speaks to men as *improvable* creatures; who are entrusted with a gracious talent, Luke xix. 12, 13; and thereby capable of choosing the path of piety, Deut. xxx. 19, 20; Jer. vi. 16.

2. *The means by which he speaks.* These are his *works*, and his *word*.—God speaks to us by his *works*. His works of *creation*, Ps. xix. 1. These prove his existence, Heb. iii. 4, and display his perfections;—his infinite power, goodness, and wisdom, Rom. i. 20. "The invisible things," &c.

"The meanest pin in nature's frame
Marks out some letter of his name;—
Across the earth, around the sky,
There's not a spot, or deep or high,
Where the Creator hath not trod,
And left the footsteps of a God."

—And by his works of *providence*. His indulgences lead us to repentance, Rom. ii. 4; his corrections and judgments

teach us lessons of righteousness, Isa. xxvi. 9; Micah vi. 9. God's works should therefore be attentively considered by us. Isa. v. 12, 13.—God speaks to us also by his word, Heb. i. 1, 2, By this it is his purpose to judge us at the last day, John xii. 48; and by this our whole deportment should now be governed, James ii. 12. That we may thus conform to the will of God, let us consider,

3. *What he says to us.* He speaks to us variously, according to our various states, as sinful, submissive, and reclaimed creatures.—As *sinful creatures*, who transgress his laws, he speaks to us in the language of reproof; charging us with rebellion, Isa. i. 1, 2; and ingratitude, Deut. xxxii. 6; and in the language of warning; shewing us that we are rejected by him, Prov. xv. 8, 26; under his curse, Gal. iii. 10; and under the sentence of eternal death, Ezek. xviii. 20; Rom. vi. 21.—As *submissive* creatures, who desire to obey him, he speaks to us in the language of kind authority, Isa. lv. 6, 7; Matt. xi. 28, 29; of encouragement, Isa. i. 16—18; and of caution against delay, Ps. xcv. 7, 8.—As *reclaimed* creatures, restored to his favour and service, he speaks to us in the language of instruction, Micah vi. 8; Tit. ii. 12; and in the language of consolation, Isa. xl. 1; Psalm lxxxiv. 11. Let us consider,

4. *With what design he speaks.* This is to engage our obedience.—His works teach us to glorify him as God, Rom. i. 21. His word requires practical piety as man's indispensable duty, 1 Sam. xv. 22; Matt. vii. 21; James i. 22, 25. The obedience thus required must be *prompt*, without delay, Job xxii. 21. *Universal*, without defect, Psalm cxix, 6. *Persevering*, without intermission, Rom. ii. 7; and *humble*, without arrogance. It must be humbly ascribed to divine grace, Isaiah xxvi. 12; humbly presented through Christ for acceptance, 1 Peter ii. 5; and humbly acknowledged as unprofitable at best, Luke xvii. 10. Such being the obedience which God requires, let us consider,

II. HIS CLAIMS ON OUR OBEDIENCE TO HIS VOICE. These will appear by answering the enquiry here instituted; “Who is the LORD,” &c.

1. *He is our indisputable Proprietor.* He becomes thus—By right of *creation*; he is the LORD our MAKER, Ps. xcv. 6, 7, and c. 3; and by right of *preservation*; sustaining us by his

constant agency on us, and care for us, Job x. 12; Acts xvii. 28; Ps. cxlv. 15, 16. Hence we are obliged to obey GOD on principles of *equity*, Ps. cxix. 73.

2. *He is our acknowledged Sovereign.* This he is by our baptismal covenant, and by open, deliberate profession of subjection to him, Deut. xxvi. 17. Obedience to GOD is therefore due on principles of *fidelity*, 2 Tim. ii. 19; Eccl. v. 4.

3. *He is our best Friend, and kindest Benefactor.* This is evident—From his various *providential indulgences*, Ps. lxxviii. 19. From his *redeeming mercy*, by which eternal salvation is provided for a perishing world, John iii. 16; 2 Cor. viii. 9. And from his *gracious influence*, which is freely given to all who ask it, Luke xi. 13. Hence obedience to GOD is due on principles of *gratitude*, Rom. xii. 1.

4. *He is the Disposer of our eternal destiny.* As such—He is *omniscient*, to observe all our deportment—all our actions, words, and thoughts, Ps. cxxxix. 1—4; Job xxxiv. 21, 22. He is *just*, to recompense all characters, 2 Cor. v. 10; John v. 28, 29. He is *powerful*, to execute all his purposes, both of mercy and vengeance, James iv. 12. Hence we should obey GOD on principles of *prudence*; that we may secure the approbation of our Judge, 1 John ii. 28. Thus while GOD remains our Proprietor, our Sovereign, our Friend, and our Judge, his claims must be admitted. And this admission *justifies scriptural piety from reproach—demonstrates the evil of irreligion—and encourages the hope of penitents.*

It justifies scriptural piety from reproach.—By scriptural piety is meant, that obedience which GOD requires in his word; obedience, seasonable in its commencement; universal in its extent; constant in its exercise; and humble in its pretensions. This is frequently reproached by the ungodly, as irrational, disgraceful, injurious to our interest, and a source of melancholy. But compliance with the demands of justice cannot be unreasonable; the exercise of fidelity and gratitude cannot be disgraceful; the acquisition of godliness cannot be injurious, 1 Tim. iv. 8; nor can melancholy arise from a smiling conscience, and cheerful hope, Matt. xi. 19; 1 Pet. ii. 15.

2. *It demonstrates the evil of irreligion*, or inattention and disobedience to GOD's voice. This is too common in all

ages, Job. xxi. 14, 15. It is an evil in itself, as all who are guilty of it are sacrilegious, treacherous, ungrateful, and mad self-destroyers, Eccles. ix. 3. It is an evil in its consequences; being attended with remorse here, and torment hereafter, Rom. iii. 16, 17, 18. Though kings set the dreadful example, and whole nations follow it; neither their dignity nor number can exempt them from vengeance, Isa. xxx. 33; Ps. ix. 17.

3. *It inspires penitents with hope.* GOD's voice encourages them to hope—for gracious illumination, Prov. i. 23; for redeeming mercy, Ps. cxxx. 7, 8; and for eternal life, Ezek. xviii. 27, 28; Rev. xxii. 14. "Blessed," &c. ALPHA.

IV. ISRAEL'S RETROSPECT.

DEUT. viii. 2.

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no."

IN the natural world, objects in vast variety attract our attention; we look above, beneath, and around, and see much to excite our astonishment, admiration, and gratitude. In the intellectual world, every individual is principally engaged, either in revolving on the past, or anticipating the future. In general we attempt to explore the vast and untried region of futurity; and while we glide down on the rapid current of time, we are continually looking out for more enchanting scenes, or expecting to realize more pleasing sensations, than any with which we have yet been favoured; but whatever claims futurity may have upon us, yet it should not so far absorb our attention as to obliterate from our memories the recollection of the past; and

though it would be our interest to bury many of our actions in the grave of eternal oblivion, yet the goodness of God towards us should ever live in our recollection : and this is the object to which Moses directed the attention of Israel ;—" Thou shalt remember all the way," &c. We will consider,

1. GOD'S CONDUCT TOWARDS ISRAEL.

The Lord thy God led thee, &c. 1. Their leader—*the Lord thy God* : this expresses his exalted character, *the Lord* ; and the endearing relation in which he stood to Israel, *thy God*. Having such a leader, they enjoyed infallible direction, essential succour, and unconquerable defence ; as their God, they claimed an interest in him ; an interest in his *perfections*, in his *covenant*, in his *promises*, and in his *kingdom*. 2. The persons *led*, *the Lord thy God led thee*. Israel, the seed of Jacob, who had power over the angel, and prevailed, Hos. xii. 4. Israel, though composed of so many thousands of individuals, is addressed as a single person : God's people are eminently one, members of one body, stones in one building, branches in one vine, actuated by one spirit, treading one path, aiming at one object, tending to one place, &c. 3. The place where he led them, denominated the *wilderness* ; this was a tract of the country *so barren*, that it was said to be a land not sown, and food was miraculously given to sustain the travellers. It was *so inhospitable*, that they were frequently annoyed by the menaces and attacks of the surrounding inhabitants ; and it was *so dangerous*, that many died by fiery flying serpents, scorpions, &c. Deut. i. 19 ; Num. xxi. 6 ; Deut. viii. 15. In all these views, it was strikingly illustrative of the world's wide wilderness, through which God leads his people now. 4. The manner how God led them,—in *the way* ; though it was through the wilderness, yet it was in the way ;—a way divinely *appointed*, and divinely *illuminated*. God went before them, by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire, Num. xiv. 14. And is the Christian's way marked with inferior tokens of divine appointment or directing influence ? No ! read Isa. xlii. 16 ; Psalm xxxvii. 23. xxxii. 8 ; John xvi. 13. 5. The period God led them,—*forty years* ; years of *murmuring*, and years of *provocation* ; when God was insulted, his word discredited, his messengers despised, his benefits slighted, and yet God led them. Oh the triumphs of Divine patience ! Psalm xcv. 10.

II. GOD'S DESIGNS CONCERNING ISRAEL.

To humble thee, &c. Pride is a sin common to degenerated man, whether he pines in obscurity amid the wild waste of a desert, or fares luxuriously in the splendid palace of a monarch; but it is peculiarly hateful in the sight of GOD, as it derogates from his glory, and robs him of his indisputable right. The folly of this sin will clearly appear, when we consider, that those very favours which are designed to humble us, by leading us to a discovery of our dependence upon GOD, are frequently made the ground-work, or pedestal, of our pride. Is a man rich? instead of acknowledging that it is GOD who gives power to gain wealth, he glories in his riches, &c. How did GOD humble Israel? By withdrawing the excitements to pride. Some pride themselves in their sumptuous banquets;—Israel had the mortification to be fed invariably with the same kind of food. Others, in their vast variety of new and fashionable apparel;—the raiment of Israel waxed not old for forty years. Some glory in their richly-furnished mansions;—Israel abode in tents, exposed to all the inclemencies of the seasons. Others, in their extensive possessions;—Israel had no inheritance in the wilderness. Thus GOD led them forty years to humble them. 2. *To prove thee:* God proved *their faith*, whether they would depend on the truth of his promise, when they saw no visible way of its accomplishment; whether they would believe they should be supplied with food, when they had neither storehouse, nor barn; whether they could depend on GOD for deliverance, when such formidable hosts encamped against them. He proved *their love*, Deut. viii. 5. He proved *their patience*, by permitting them to wander forty years. 3. *To know what was in thine heart, &c.* or manifest whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, &c. GOD gave Israel many commandments,—judicial, ceremonial, and moral;—these were designed to be kept:—kept *in their minds* to be understood, *in their hearts* to be loved, *in their memories* to be recollected, *in their lives* to be practised. God gives commandments, but it rests with us to keep them.

III. ISRAEL'S DUTY TO GOD. *Thou shalt remember, &c.* The *first* reason for such a precept arose from the character of the way. It was a memorable way; marked with signs, and wonders, and miracles; and was there not propriety in remembering such a way? Why are pyramids, obelisks, and statues

erected, but to perpetuate memorable events? and never were events more worthy of remembrance than those which Israel witnessed. The *second* reason arose from the character of the leader. His amazing condescension, his matchless mercy, his uniform patience, his boundless goodness: oh, how worthy of remembrance! The *third* reason arose from the advantages likely to result from such a remembrance. It would excite gratitude,—strengthen faith,—increase love.

Inferences:—1. Observe the deep interest which Moses felt in the welfare of Israel: he was about to leave a people with whom he had long sojourned, whose murmurings he had heard, and whose insults he had borne; they were about to enter into the good land, so long sought, so frequently promised, and so ardently desired;—a land which he was forbidden to enter; but how desirous was he to give Israel his last advice, guarding them against forgetfulness of God, v. 10, 11; against pride, v. 14; against idolatry, v. 19.—2. The designs of God towards his people, are designs of mercy and love,—*To humble thee*, &c.—3. Whatever your circumstances may be in future life, never forget what you once were—and what you have passed through—and who led you through the wilderness to go to a city of habitation.

BETA.

V. DIVINE CORRECTION.

DEUT. viii. 5.

“Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.”

How numerous and various were the methods used by the Almighty to separate and preserve the Hebrews a peculiar people! The august symbols of his presence—the miraculous interposition of his providence—the frequent inculcation of their

duty, with the strongest arguments to enforce its performance,—all conspired to furnish them with motives to obedience. Moses is here endeavouring to persuade them *to keep the commandments of God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him*. This he urges from a *recollection* of what GOD had done for them, and a *consideration* of what he had promised to do, *For the Lord thy God, &c.* ver. 7. He directs them also to look back upon the wilderness through which GOD had brought them, ver. 2. The wilderness was the school in which they had been educated and prepared for the enjoyment of the promised land, &c. In calling to remembrance the past forty years, they were not to forget the chastening of the LORD, *Thou shalt also consider, &c.* How often has affliction been lost upon us for want of attention to its beneficent design! Our text furnishes us with a just view of the subject. Let us consider *divine correction*,

I. AS THE MEANS OF RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT.

II. AS THE DISCIPLINE OF PATERNAL REGARD.

III. AS THE SUBJECT OF FILIAL ATTENTION.

Divine correction may be considered,

I. AS THE MEANS OF RELIGIOUS IMPROVEMENT. Never is the mind so well qualified to receive with resignation, and sustain with patience, the afflictive dispensations of Divine Providence, as when it is fully impressed with a conviction of their necessity and utility. In order to this, our sufferings must be contemplated, neither as the offspring of chance, nor as the expression of vindictive vengeance; but as the kind chastisement of our heavenly Father. Solomon and St. Paul have both availed themselves of the sentiment contained in our text;—the former as needful instruction to his son, Prov. iii. 12; the latter as seasonable consolation for suffering Christians, Heb. xii. 5, &c. With this view of the subject, we must observe the manner in which affliction promotes our religious improvement.

1. *Affliction is a restraint from evil*,—without which we should frequently fall the victims of our folly and impetuosity. By this discipline the ALMIGHTY strove to preserve the Jews from the evils to which their sins exposed them, Hos. ii. 6, 7.—GOD's dealings with his people are still the same. He afflicts in order to preserve and save. He keeps man from his purpose, because it would destroy him. He removes our pleasures, because they would poison our souls. He stops us in the

ardour of our pursuits, lest we should rush down the precipice of ruin. He keeps us in the narrow way, &c.

2. *Affliction is an excitement to duty.* How apt are we to settle down, and be at ease! GOD mercifully rouses us from lethargy and slumber. He disturbs our fatal repose, and embitters earth, to raise our thoughts to heaven. By affliction we are excited to frequency and fervour in our devotions. How soon does the flame languish and expire, unless maintained by fuel from the altar of GOD! How often has affliction brought us to his footstool!

3. *Affliction is a needful ordeal.* How little should we know of the genuineness and worth of our religion, if it were never placed in the crucible! Here, both its *degree* and reality are fully ascertained. Never does the Christian shine so bright as when encircled by flames; they illuminate without consuming. 1. Pet. i. 7.

4. *Affliction is a seasonable monitor.* Prosperity has a tendency to induce forgetfulness of GOD,—a most ungrateful effect; yet such is our corruption, that we are never more ready to forget our benefactor, than when loaded with his benefits. Adversity rouses the mind to reflection—carries it back in self-examination; the blessings lost, the mercies neglected, &c. Divine correction may be considered,

II. AS THE DISCIPLINE OF PATERNAL REGARD. There is no character so frequently assumed, and so variously applied by the ALMIGHTY, as the paternal one: sometimes to express pity; sometimes to denote his authority; and sometimes to describe the nature of his discipline. But, alas! how few earthly parents will furnish us with a portraiture of our heavenly FATHER!—how much imbecility, ignorance, and passion mark their domestic discipline! Even the best fall so far short of perfection as hardly to admit a fair comparison. However, a few points of resemblance may be remarked. A father corrects his children,

1. *With reluctance.* He tries every method before he inflicts punishment. All the eloquence of love—all the entreaty of affection, &c. &c. So our FATHER which is in heaven,—he suffers long, &c. At first he uses means the most gentle;—never taking up the rod till it is necessary.

2. *With wisdom.* The calmest, the clearest, the most deli-

berate wisdom; in a way the best calculated to produce reformation. This may sometimes appear severe; but he knows best. *Our Father* is the fountain of wisdom. He corrects in wisdom, as it regards the *time* and *manner*, and the *instruments*—all wisely selected, and wisely employed.

3. *With tenderness.* Cruelty should never enter into paternal discipline: it directly defeats its own object. It is calculated to irritate, rather than to conciliate—to harden, rather than to soften. GOD is not an austere master, but a kind Father; he does all in *tenderness*. He feels what he inflicts—he is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. While he corrects with one hand, he supports with the other: he wounds only to heal. “We have had Fathers of our flesh,” &c. Heb. xii. 9, 10; Ps. ciii. 13.

4. *With design.* A wise parent never corrects without a proposed object. GOD does nothing without design; and all the dispensations of his providence have a direct and active bearing upon his object. This object is our good: if we concur with him, his design will be fully accomplished.—Divine correction may be considered,

III. AS THE SUBJECT OF FILIAL ATTENTION. How awful is it when affliction is useless; when correction hardens; when medicine poisons! Beware of this—“Consider in thine heart,” &c.

1. *Acknowledge his hand.* Trace your afflictions to their proper cause. Ascend by meditation to the throne on which the Father is seated. Observe and kiss the hand which holds the rod.

2. *Submit to his authority.* Submission is the perfection of Christianity;—the submission, not of apathy, but sensibility;—of a yielding but bleeding heart. Shall a scholar murmur against the discipline of wisdom and goodness?

3. *Improve his design.* This must be known to be improved. You cannot know each particular design;—but you may the grand and ultimate one. *Let us improve in all, and by all.*

EPSILON.

VI. THE TROUBLES OF SIN.

JOSHUA vii. 25.

“And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day.”

THERE are two distinct kinds of characters, whose names have been transmitted to posterity, and whose fame has been echoed and re-echoed by an astonished populace; some for their virtues, and some for their crimes; some for their glory, and some for their shame: and it was the lot of the person, to whom the text was addressed, to be of the latter description; a man who committed a notorious offence, and who met with a shameful and a degrading punishment. The context will sufficiently illustrate the crime of Achan; the peculiar process by which that crime was detected; and the mischievous effects by which it was attended. We will take occasion from the text to shew.

I. THAT SIN IS A VERY TROUBLESOME THING.

The nature of sin may be clearly discovered in the subject before us: the children of Israel had just entered into the promised land; they had besieged Jericho; they had compassed it about seven days—had blown with their trumpets—the walls had fallen down flat—and they had taken possession of the city. Joshua had charged the people not to *take of the accursed things*, &c., vi. 18, Achan violated this charge, vii. 21: Such is the nature of all our crimes. God has given us the most plain, positive precepts; capable of universal application: these precepts we either ignorantly or wickedly transgress; and this transgression is sin. To prove that *sin is a troublesome thing*, let us consider, 1st. *The load of guilt by which it oppresses us*. Whatever pleasure may attach to the *anticipation* or the *act* of sin, yet the recollection of it must sooner or later, necessarily produce pain, arising from a consciousness that we have offended God, provoked his Majesty, grieved his Spirit, and exposed ourselves to the eternal punishment of hell.—2nd. *The shifts, subterfuges, and tricks resorted to for the purpose of concealing our sins, or*

transferring the blame to others, are convincing proofs that sin troubles us. Look at Adam, our great progenitor in crime; he first sought to hide himself from his Maker's presence: he then attempts to shift off the blame on 'the woman; and the woman, in her turn, transfers it to the serpent. Behold Achan, allured by the tempting glare of the gold, and the tawdry vestment; he slyly purloins them, digs a hole beneath his tent, and there conceals the pilfered spoils: had he no fear of being discovered? There are thousands of crimes perpetrated in the dark, when the deluded subjects have trembled with fearful apprehensions, lest they should be detected.—3rd. *Sin troubles us by its corrupt and restless influence on the tempers and dispositions.* Every sinful temper is troublesome. How troublesome to be *proud*—look at Haman and Nebuchadnezzar; to be *envious*—behold Pharaoh, Saul, and the ungodly Jews who crucified Christ; to be *covetous*—see Achan, Gehazi, Ananias, and Judas, Isaiah lvii. 20. *But it is chiefly into futurity that we are to look for the troubles of sin,* Prov. xi. 21.; Ezek. xviii. 4.; Romans vi. 23. Thus sin produces trouble *personally*. But it is relative trouble to which the text refers;—"Why hast thou troubled *us*?" A sinner is a troublesome being; he troubles his family: look at Achan, ver. 24.; Prov. xv. 27. It is very questionable whether his sons and his daughters were burnt with him, or were only spectators of his punishment; at any rate, his sin must have been a source of inconsolable grief to his family. Happy for the world were there no such ungodly parents now; but, alas! we can help seeing that characters, not a whit better than Achan, abound in every department of society. But the trouble produced by Achan's crimes was not merely domestic, but *national*. Israel was discomfited: some fell in battle: the hearts of the people melted, and became as water: Joshua, valiant and courageous as he was, rent his clothes, fell on his face, and regretted that they had ever crossed Jordan, chap. vii. 5—9. The whole nation of Israel groaned under the curse of Achan's sin. Oh, how frequently has the pride or ambition of a few individuals troubled a whole nation, and disturbed the peace of millions!

II. HOWEVER ARTFULLY CONCEALED, SIN MUST BE EXPOSED.

Who can doubt but that Achan strove to conceal his crime ? but by the providence of God it was exposed to the camp of Israel. 1st. *The most secret sins are often revealed in this world.* Some declare their *sin, as Sodom*, Isa. iii. 9. Others seek to conceal their crimes, and use a thousand artifices to cover their transgressions ; but oh, how vain ! by a marvellous providence they are often disclosed ; and not unfrequently sinners have revealed their own shame. 2nd. *Those sins that escape detection here, will be manifested in the last day.* Eccles. xii. 14.

III, WHEN THE SINNER IS EXPOSED, HE IS LEFT WITHOUT ANY REASONABLE EXCUSE,

Joshua said, “ *Why* hast thou troubled us ? ” What could he say ? Could he plead ignorance of the law ? No ; it was published in the camp of Israel. The weakness of human nature ? No ; he had strength to do his duty. The prevalence of temptation ? No ; others had similar temptations, and yet conquered. And what shall we have to say, when God shall summon us to his bar ? Alas ! if guilty, we shall be as speechless as Achan was.

IV. THAT PUNISHMENT TREADS UPON THE HEELS OF SIN.

“ The Lord shall trouble thee this day. ” 1st, *God has power to trouble sinners.* He can make the elements become the executioners of his wrath, as he did to Sodom, &c. He can make the most despicable insects plague his enemies, as he did to the Egyptians. He can arm the sinner’s conscience against himself, as he did to Judas. Nay, the whole creation is a “ capacious reservoir of means,” which he can employ at his pleasure. 2nd. *God will trouble sinners.* He will either bring them to repentance, when they shall “ look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn ; ” or, he will vex them in his wrath, and dash them in pieces as a potter’s vessel. To be convinced that he *will* trouble sinners, we need only read his threatenings, and observe his general conduct. And what kind of trouble will be their portion, when God will shut them out of heaven, and plunge them with his vengeful curse upon their heads, into a burning lake of fire burning with brimstone, I am at a loss to describe. Infer 1st. *What a powerful preventive this should be to deter us from committing sin.* We all feel a repugnance to trouble,

we shrink from its attacks,—and sin must trouble us; then why live under its power? 2nd. *See the madness of sinners*, who for the sake of a few sordid despicable pleasures, which always leave a string behind, will desperately plunge themselves into an abyss of troubles, which know no bound nor termination. 3rd. *Since sin is so troublesome, let us all seek a deliverance from its dominion and influence.* “The blood of Jesus Christ the son of God, cleanseth us from all sin.” 4th. *Learn what ideas you should entertain of those who seek to entice you to sin.* They are agents of the devil, and you should shun them as you would shun perdition.

BETA.

VII. HOLY ARDOUR.

PSALM lxi. 8.

“My soul followeth hard after thee.”

To mankind in general this passage must be quite unintelligible. “God is not in all their thoughts,” consequently they neither desire nor seek him. They might use the text with great propriety to express their attachment to the world, and its various objects — “Riches, honours, power, pleasures, our souls follow hard after you.” It is only the Christian that can truly adopt this language as his own. But even among professing Christians too many are strangers to such sacred fervours; many feel them but too seldom; and few, if any, appreciate them aright. It will therefore be proper,

I. TO DESCRIBE THIS STATE OF EXPERIENCE. It implies, 1st. *A renunciation of the world.* This results from a conviction of its vanity. No man can follow God and the world at once, Matt. vi. 24.; Luke xvi. 13.; 1 John ii. 15. But we never renounce the world till we feel its vanity, and sensibly

apprehend the fallacy of its *pretensions*, the unsatisfying nature of its *enjoyments*, the uncertainty and shortness of its *tenure*. In renouncing the world, however, we do not neglect its lawful concerns; shun human society; or despise the blessings of Providence. But we withdraw all *dependence* upon it, all improper *attachment* to it, and all, *anxious cares* concerning it.

2. *A deliberate choice of God*, as the only adequate good of the soul. The soul must have some supreme object. The creature renounced, it can only cleave to the Creator, whom it now views as the sovereign GOOD, *suitable* to its nature, *adequate* to its wants, *permanent and secure* in possession.

3. *A vehement and intense desire after Him*. This is the sense of the text. Perhaps the Psalmist alludes to a thirsty hart seeking the cooling brook, ver. 1.: Ps. xliii. 1. The soul longs ardently to *know* God in Christ more explicitly; to be more perfectly *conformed to his image*; to have more *intimate communion* with him; and, finally, *to enjoy him* in all his plenitude for ever.

4. *The exercises of faith and hope*. GOD can only be known by faith; and unless we believe he is to be found, we shall never seek after him, Heb. xi. 2. The soul *apprehends* him as its GOD in CHRIST, and fully *anticipates* all the enjoyments which it desires. And in this exercise of faith and hope there is *present delight*. The soul divinely sustained ("thy right hand upholdeth me") cheerfully and eagerly follows after GOD in the path of duty—in prayer, hearing, and all his ordinances. We are now led.

II. TO INVESTIGATE THE REASONS WHY IT IS SO RARE.

It is obvious few Christians enjoy this experience; at least it is only *occasionally*, and not *generally*, that their hearts are in this state. The principal causes of their languor are,

1. *Inattention to the state of their own hearts*. They are not recollected; they do not examine themselves closely. Hence they are ignorant of their real condition, and do not keenly feel their wants. But unless we are deeply sensible of our need of God, we shall never follow hard after him.

2. *Permitting the objects of sense to make too deep impressions*. These naturally tend to blunt the edge of holy desire,

and to divide and weaken the soul. Whatever convictions may have been received of the vanity of the world, it will again obtain the ascendancy without much watchfulness and firm resistance.

3. *Neglect of the instituted means.* This indeed is often the *effect* of losing spiritual ardour. But it is more frequently the *cause*. When we imagine that the holy flame will burn without the aid of additional fuel, and without fanning it by frequent approaches to God, we fall into a dangerous, and too often *fatal* snare.

4. *The indulgence of wrong dispositions, &c.* Unbelief, pride, vain curiosity, levity, censoriousness, uncharitable or useless conversation, &c.; all these, like cold water, tend to damp and weaken, if not wholly to extinguish, the desire for God.

These are the principal reasons why David's experience is now so rarely enjoyed. But surely if Christians knew how to value this state aright, they would never permit these causes so frequently to deprive them of it. In order to induce them to resist those hindrances, and to cultivate this state of soul, let us proceed,

III. TO REPRESENT IT AS THE MOST DESIRABLE EXPERIENCE.

Innumerable are the advantages which result from it. We can only name a few.

It is the best security against the allurements and troubles of the world. A heart earnestly pursuing God has no leisure to gaze on the seductive charms of temporal good, and no disposition to pierce itself with the thorns of worldly solicitude. Comparative indifference to all but God, disarms both pleasure and pain of their power to injure, while the soul, free and disentangled, rapidly moves on in her heavenly course.

2. *It renders every duty delightful.* In this state nothing is done through custom, formality, or any other inferior motive—but every duty is performed with the highest views. God in Christ is aimed at in all; and oh! how sweet is prayer or praise, reading or hearing, meditation or Christian conversation, or even the commonest affairs of life, when we thus do all “in the name of our Lord Jesus,” &c. Col. iii. 17.

3. *It prepares us for the largest communication.* We always receive from God what we earnestly and faithfully seek from him, Luke ii. 9, 10. In proportion, therefore, as our souls are enlarged by holy desire, humble faith, and earnest expectations will be the divine communications unto them. By this holy fervour the soul throws itself open to receive all the fulness of God,—the shoreless, fathomless ocean of good.

4. *It advances our sanctification, and consequently qualifies us for heaven.* Detaching us from the creature, fixing us upon the Creator, leading us to communion and fellowship with him, we naturally imbibe more and more of his *Spirit*, become more and more transformed into his *likeness*. All sin vanishes from his powerful presence; pure universal love occupies our whole hearts; and thus we become meet for our inheritance among the saints in light.

Let us conclude by addressing,

1. Those whose hearts are wholly set upon the world. You cleave to visible objects, and entirely neglect your Maker, Benefactor, and Redeemer—your Sovereign, Lawgiver and Judge. Oh, consider *the excess of your folly*: you prefer shadows to realities, vexation of spirit to peace of mind, misery to bliss. *The baseness of your ingratitude*:—you reject your only friend, and side with his enemies. *The enormity of your guilt*:—you idolize the creature, and pour contempt upon the Creator. *The imminence of your danger*:—you are exposed to the fierceness of the Divine displeasure, to all the torments of hell, Jer. xvii. 5; John iii. 31.

2. Lukewarm and unstable professors! you are, if possible, more culpable than the former. Consider how inconsistent your character is with your *obligations*—your *engagements*—your *profession*—and your *interest*.

3. Ardent spiritually-minded Christians! go forward; fear not the imputation of enthusiasm—fear no disappointment. Believe the promises; cherish the most sanguine hopes. Delight yourselves in the Lord, and he shall give you the desires of your hearts, Matt. v. 6; Rev. xxi. 6.

DELTA.

VIII. DIVINE WORSHIP.

PSALM lxxxiv. 1, 2.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

WHILE the Israelites were in the wilderness, on their way to Canaan, dwelling in tents, God commanded Moses to erect a tent or tabernacle for religious uses, A part of this tent was peculiarly sacred, and called *the holy of holies*. Adjoining this was the *holy place*, separated from the former by a vail; and connected with the holy place was a court, where sacrifices were offered; and into which the people were occasionally permitted to enter; see Exod. xxv. 8, and xxix. 38—46.; chaps. xxxvi to xl; and Heb. chap. ix. At this tabernacle, as well as in the temple afterwards built by Solomon, the hosts of Israel assembled to worship God; here divine worship was performed according to the Jewish ritual; and here the God of Israel manifested his presence.

To a pious Israelite all these circumstances were very interesting; and these evidently were the things which excited the admiration, and called forth the warm desires of the Psalmist, when he uttered the language of the text.

Let these words lead our attention to—*The amiableness of divine worship*; and to—*The manner in which devout worshippers are drawn to its sacred exercises*.

I. THE AMIABLENESS OF DIVINE WORSHIP may be discerned, by adverting to—The persons assembled,—Their engagements,—and some interesting results, to which such engagements lead.

Behold the assembly! It is composed of rational, immortal, accountable creatures; of persons whose ages, relative situations, and conditions, are various. They are assembled in the name of God their Maker and Preserver,—of Christ their Redeemer;—their business is one, and is of everlasting importance. To adore the infinite Jehovah; to obtain pardon, regeneration, and holiness; are the purposes for which they assemble;—and the Lord of Hosts is with them, Jesus is in the midst of them; and angels unperceived join their assembly.

Proceed with them in their devotions, Psalms, hymns, divine songs, accompanied by melodious and harmonious sounds, say, or seem to say,—“Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion.” And their very ears are gratified, and their spirits are exhilarated, by harmony and melody, employed in so sacred, so good a cause.

Prayer to God forms another part of their solemn exercises. They approach “the footstool of their God:” they worship, they bow down, they kneel before the Lord their Maker, (Ps. xcv. 6.); and speak to, and commune with, the Father of their spirits; and Jesus being their Advocate, their Mediator, the petitions offered up though him are regarded; and “the fervent prayer availeth much.”

The ministry of the sacred word is another interesting circumstance connected with public worship. Here the holy Scriptures are read, illustrated, and suitably applied. And God opening the eyes of those present, to behold wondrous things out of his law (Ps. cxix. 18.), they realize, or may realize, what is so beautifully described in the following language, Ps. xix. 7—11.

Such engagements as the above are, with the truly devout, accompanied by dispositions, sensations, and enjoyments, highly important. “God is a spirit;” and they “worship him in spirit and in truth.” They have “fellowship one with another, and with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ.” And such a situation, connected with such circumstances, is to them “the house of God, and the gate of heaven,” Gen. xxviii. 17.

Besides all this, if we look more minutely, and listen more attentively, we shall behold tears of penitence, and hear the sighing of such as are sorrowful on account of their sins and shall have evidence that there are in the assembly broken and contrite spirits, whom God will not despise. (Ps. li. 17.)

To render the scene still more interesting:—see cheerful countenances, that bespeak hearts conscious of his approbation, in whose favour is life (Ps. xxx. 5.); and hear the song of praise, (Isa. xii. 1, 2.), and the language of deliverance, (Ps. xxvii. 6, and xli. 1—3.); and say, are not God’s tabernacles amiable? And may not those who love his worship express their desire after it in the following language? “My soul longeth,” &c. Let us examine these words, and we shall perceive,

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH DEVOUT WORSHIPPERS ARE

DRAWN TO ITS SACRED EXERCISES. The Psalmist desired—*The courts of the Lord, and the living God. All his powers were drawn towards these objects ; and drawn towards them in a very intense manner.*

The expression—“*courts of the Lord,*” and “*living God,*” include all that is desirable in divine worship. Some desire only the “*courts of the Lord :*” the place, the company, the outward expressions of divine worship. Others almost despise these, while they profess to desire “*the living God.*” With the *former*, any observations about the divine presence in the place of worship are accounted enthusiastic ;—with the *latter*, public prayer, praise, and teaching, are almost things of nought. But mark this devout worshipper: with him there was something very desirable *in the courts*. The social assembly,—the outward act,—the very *place* where he usually worshipped, had strong attractions; and yet these were desirable to him, only as they led to the glorious objects of devotion,—*the living God*. Without his presence, all worship is a lifeless form; but when his “power and glory are seen in the sanctuary,” the place is holy; the exercises are delightful; and such as call into action *all the powers of the truly devout*.

Observe,—“My *soul* longeth, my *heart* and my *flesh* crieth out.” Surely, *soul*,—*heart*,—*flesh*,—are intended to signify all those faculties which man can exercise in the worship of God. The Psalmist’s understanding, his judgment, his will, his affections, and his desires, concurred: all within him was drawn to the holy exercise: while his eyes were turned towards the place his feet were willing to convey him thither,—his hands were ready to be lifted up,—and his tongue was free for prayer and for praise.

Mark, too, how intensely he was drawn :—his “*soul longed, even fainted* for the courts of the Lord: his heart and his flesh *cried out* for the living God.” We need not to dwell on these expressions, they speak for themselves: rather let us strive to feel as the sacred writer felt. “Come, holy Dove, from the heavenly hill, and warm our frozen hearts.” Think, oh think on the great, the adorable object of worship; on his power, his goodness, his mercy, his love in Christ Jesus!—and say, Do not all these demand the *warmest* and the *strongest* exercise of all our rational, and—so far as it is necessary for the expression of our feelings

and views—of all our bodily powers? See Deut. vi. 5; Matt. xxii. 37; Ps. xlii. 1, 2.

Ye formalists; ye enthusiasts; ye men of reason unaccompanied by affection,—of feeling unaccompanied by reason; and ye who despise ordinances, as well as ye who trust in them;—read this sacred book of devotion, the book of Psalms; and learn how to worship God in “the beauty of holiness,”—“in spirit and in truth!”

Let the following reflections conclude the subject.—1. Such exercises, such dispositions, and such enjoyments, as we have been considering, are congenial to the employments and the happiness of heaven, see Ps. xvi. 11; John xvii. 24; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; Rev. vii. 9—12, 15, and xxi. 3. To that state, probably, the mind of the Psalmist ascended, when he uttered the words of the text (Ps. xxiii. 6, and xvi. 11); at least, *we* may presume so far (Heb. viii. 5, and chap. ix.), and think on that period, when we shall serve God day and night in his temple above, Rev. vii. 15.

2. Let the subject teach us more than ever to value divine worship; more than ever to engage in it; and to engage in it *better*, than ever.

3. Let us recollect, that a meetness for heaven is as necessary as a title; and that the means of grace, when properly engaged in, are well calculated to promote that meetness.

4. And let us never forget, that if we would be benefited in divine worship, we must look through the veil of outward things, and *principally* desire the presence of the *living* God.

GAMMA.

IX. THE CITY OF GOD.

PSALM lxxxvii. 3.

“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.”

ALTHOUGH the whole of this Psalm literally refers to the ancient city of David, it is undoubtedly an encomium on the

glory and privileges of the gospel Church, of which Jerusalem was a type. Jerusalem was exalted and fortified by its situation, but much more so by the favour and protection of JEHOVAH, verse 1, 2; "He loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." What Jerusalem *was*, that the Christian Church now *is*—built by God "upon the foundation," &c., Ephesians ii. 20. He loves her beyond the kingdoms and empires of the earth, which rise and fall only to subserve his purposes concerning her. But although Jerusalem was eminently typical of the Church on earth, it was no less so of the triumphant Church above. We shall therefore contemplate the words of our text,

I. IN THEIR LITERAL REFERENCE TO THE JEWISH METROPOLIS. Jerusalem was truly the "city of God;" the city which he particularly chose—to which he paid especial regard. Hence "glorious things" were spoken of her. She was beautiful for situation, magnificent in her buildings, the delight of the nations, and the joy of the whole earth. She was the emporium of Jewish commerce, and the seat of oriental learning. Above all others, the following glorious things were spoken of this city:

1. *There was the seat of the civil government.* There were the splendid courts of the kings of Judah. "There," says the Psalmist, "are set the thrones of judgment," &c. There the princes and nobles resided—thence issued the mandates by which the people were governed, &c.

2. *There the divine ordinances were celebrated.* There was the ark, the altar, the sacrifices, the stupendous temple of Solomon, and the testimony of JEHOVAH. There were the singers, the musicians, and the priests. Yea, there were the visible symbols of the Divine glory, and the King of Heaven dwelling in the midst of his people, 2 Chronicles vii. 16; Ps. xlviii.

3. *There was the general rendezvous of all the Israelitish tribes.* Three times a-year all the males came up to worship at Jerusalem. How interesting to see such multitudes all assembled to praise the Lord in the beauty of holiness, playing on sacred instruments, singing, making solemn processions, &c.

4. This city received a *glorious name*, "vision of peace;"

and was at length honoured with *the presence of our Lord*, "the Prince of Peace."

II. IN THEIR SPIRITUAL APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. St. Paul styles this "Jerusalem which is from above, which is the mother of us all"—of all believers, Gal. iv. 26. Hence Christians are represented as "fellow citizens." Eph. ii. 19. Now of this spiritual city, the antitype of Zion, glorious things are spoken:—

1. *That she is gloriously founded by the living God.* The Church exists by his good pleasure and purpose. The plan was formed in the divine counsels, and fulfilled by the divine hand. 1. She is built upon Jesus, the sure foundation and precious corner-stone. 2. He purchased the church with his own blood. 3. Instituted all her ordinances. 4. Quickens every member by his own Spirit. 5. Protects and supports her by his power; and, 6. Designs by all the wonders of his providence and grace to establish her for ever.

2. *That she possesses glorious privileges.* All ancient enfranchised cities had various immunities and privileges; but none ever had such as are enjoyed in the Church. Some of these are, 1. spiritual illumination. The Church is to the world as *Goshen to Egypt*. 2. Justification by faith. 3. The peace of God. 4. Divine love. 5. Joy in the Holy Ghost. 6. Protection from danger. 7. Triumph over enemies. 8. Inestimable riches, and glorious dignities. 9. The constant presence and favour of Christ.

3. *That she contains glorious inhabitants.* Suitable to the dignity of the founder, and the value of the privileges, is the character of the denizens. 1. They are all *free*, Gal. iv. 31. 2. They are a *heavenly race*, born of God; 1 John iii. 1. 3. A *holy people*. 4. *Priests and kings*; 1 Pet. ii. 9.; Rev. i. 6. 5. *Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. 17; Psalm xv.

4. *That glorious promises shall be accomplished in her.* See a summary of these in that magnificent prophecy, Isa. lx.

III. IN THEIR GRANDEST TYPICAL REFERENCE TO HEAVEN ITSELF. Heaven is emphatically "the city of the Great King"—the "city which hath foundations"—"which is to come." The city which the ancient patriarchs sought, and which St. John saw in vision, and afterwards described.

The future state of the saints is represented by various figures, calculated to convey the sublimest ideas of its perfection: a mansion, inheritance, crown, throne, &c. But it is a *place* as well as a *state*. Though the essence of Deity pervades immensity, yet, every other nature being finite, it is necessary there should be a *local* display of his glory, in some central point, where all the happy intelligences of the universe may be collected. That place is heaven; and glorious things are spoken thereof in the oracles of God. It is,

1. *Surpassingly grand in magnificence*. There the throne of the Supreme Glory is erected; and there the manifestations of Deity are witnessed. The sun is a splendid object here; the radiance of the stars, and the beauty of the firmament, impress our senses strongly; but these, and all other resplendent objects which glitter in mortal eyes, have no glory, by reason of that which excelleth. See Rev. iv. and xxi. 9 to xxii. 5, where this glory is minutely described.

2. *Absolutely complete in its enjoyments*. This will clearly appear when we consider that it comprises,

1. The perfect exclusion of all evil. 2. The utmost perfection of body and soul. 3. The vision and fruition of God and Christ. 4. The most glorious and amicable society. 5. The most pleasing engagements,

3. *Eternal in its duration*. Being built by Jehovah, it rests upon his own goodness, power, and truth—an immoveable basis. "The saints shall reign for ever and ever." Believers "shall not perish, but have everlasting life;" God, "who hath given us the hope of eternal life by Christ Jesus before the world began," cannot lie, or deny himself, Titus i. 2, 3. This is the brightest gem in the crown of righteousness,—the most radiant star in the constellation of future glory.

IMPROVEMENT. 1. How important to be citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel church! It was an honour and a privilege to be a denizen of ancient Jerusalem—how much greater to belong to this holy community; especially as this also qualifies us for the Jerusalem above!

2. How cheerfully should Christians welcome death! It will release them from earth, and send them home to their Father's house! Purified by the blood of Jesus, they should hail the day of dissolution.

‘O happy day—that breaks our iron chain!
 That manumits—that calls from exile home!
 That leads to nature’s great metropolis,
 And re-admits us, through the guardian hand
 Of elder Brother, to our Father’s throne!
 Who hears our advocate, and through his wounds
 Beholding man, allows that tender name.’—‘’Tis this,’ &c.

3. How foolish those who remain strangers to, and foreigners from, the Church, and thereby exclude themselves from Heaven!

DELTA.

X. THE ADMIRABLE NATURE OF THE DIVINE ORACLES.

PSALM CXIX. 129.

“Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them.”

THE love of the marvellous is a very prevailing passion among mankind. To witness uncommon scenes, and to hear tales of wonder and amazement, generally afford them much delight. Hence artful and designing men have found it easy to impose upon the multitude the most improbable and incredible accounts of places, persons, and events. And even those who are aware of the imposture, are too frequently pleased with the enchantment of novel and romantic stories, and pursue the illusions of the imagination till they lose all relish for reality and truth. But would they read the Bible, in humble dependence upon its Author, they would there “behold wondrous things out of his law,” infinitely surpassing all that the natural heart has ever conceived, even the marvellous purposes and acts of the Most High. And on every sentence of this

book is impressed the seal of truth. Such was the Psalmist's view when he uttered the text; in which he expresses,

I. HIS PROFOUND ADMIRATION OF THE DIVINE ORACLES.

"Thy testimonies are wonderful." Since David's time these testimonies have been augmented by more than two-thirds of the Bible; but to the whole his emphatic declaration may with the greatest propriety be applied. They are wonderful,

1. *In their style and composition.* In this respect they are,

—*Wonderfully simple and plain.* This is their general character, notwithstanding occasional obscurities. No *histories* were ever so plainly related as those of the Bible: no *precepts* were ever more clear, or *promises* less ambiguous.

—*Wonderfully grand and sublime*, wherever the matter requires it: witness many of the Psalms; the book of Job; the prophets; Isa. xl. and xliii.; and the Apocalypse.

—*Wonderfully concise and expressive.* The sacred writers never burden their subject with a load of words. They never need many strokes to produce the requisite effect,—every word is a feature, and the moral portrait is soon complete. Witness the Proverbs, 1 Cor. xiii., &c.

2. *In their contents.* Here are comprised,

—*The most interesting records of facts.* Creation; Fall; Flood; the Call of Abraham, &c., &c., &c. The Incarnation. Life, Death &c. of Christ.

—*The most astonishing displays of truth.* Here the perfections, works, and will of God, are gloriously exhibited. More especially the amazing scheme of human redemption by our Lord Jesus, and all the variety of collateral doctrines which depend upon, or are connected with, this economy. Well might the discovery of these truths be called "*marvellous light.*"

—*The most admirable and perfect rules of life.* The moral law, its explication by our Lord in Matt. xxii. 37—39, and his admirable Sermon on the mount. The great precepts, "repent and believe,—"together with all the directions furnished by the Apostles, &c. compose a sacred code of laws easy of comprehension, suited to our ability, harmonized with each other, happy in their tendency, and honourable to God, Ps. xix. 7—11.

—*The most animating promises*, relative to all conditions and circumstances of the people of God. Blessings temporal, spiritual, and eternal,—in prosperity, adversity, temptation, death, and beyond the grave,—are guaranteed to the just, Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

—*The most tremendous threatenings*. These are addressed to the wicked, the slothful, the faithless, the backsliding, Rev. xxi. 8.

3. *Wonderful in their efficacy*, Heb. iv. 12; James i. 18; 1 Peter i. 23.

This efficacy is displayed.

—In the *alarm* they spread through the sinner's conscience. The hardened and audacious rebel feels himself arraigned at the tribunal of his own conscience, where he stands accused, convicted, and condemned, by that living word which is "sharper than a two-edged sword," Acts ii. 37, 38, &c.

—In the *consolation* they inspire into the mourner's bosom, Acts ii, 41—47; Matt. xi. 28, &c.

—In the *moral transformation* of the most degraded characters. Witness the murderous Jews who crucified the Saviour. When the Gospel was preached to them on the day of Pentecost, it transformed them into new creatures. Witness the Corinthians, some of whom were among the vilest of men, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. And witness thousands in the present day, who from being worse than brutes, become eminent for every Christian virtue, through the word of God.

—In the *support through life*, and the *conquest over death*, which they afford all real believers. View the Christian, in labour, in temptation, in difficulty, in severe affliction; the word of God affords him support, and peace, and comfort. View him in the agony of death; the divine promises are applied to his soul, and he obtains the victory. Exulting he asks, "Who shall separate," &c., Rom. viii. 35—39.

Thus then truly wonderful are the testimonies of JEHOVAH, and truly reasonable is the profound admiration which the Psalmist expresses.—Let us now view,

II. *THEIR PRACTICAL INFLUENCE*. "Therefore doth my soul keep them." Because thy oracles are so admirable, so excellent, so worthy of thee, their adorable Author, therefore

doth my soul, my rational and intellectual part, receive and keep them as an invaluable deposit. This implies,

1. *That he treasured them up in his memory.* Unlike those inattentive persons who read or hear the word of God, but are not solicitous to understand it, or to preserve the conceptions and impressions which it conveys, (like leaky vessels, these carry nothing away), David took care to understand and to preserve the truth. He knew it was the noblest employment for his memory to become the depository of God's testimonies, and every one of these was too important to be forgotten.

2. *That he kept them in exercises of faith.* He received them as *God's* testimonies, and relied upon them as an immoveable foundation. By this faith they became spirit and life to him. Without this vital realizing faith, though a man could repeat the whole Bible, and had the most systematic view of its contents, all would be vain. We only feel interested in the Scriptures in proportion as we heartily believe them—and it is only in the same proportion that they become efficacious.

3. *That he held them in constant esteem, and embraced them with earnest affection.* This he often expresses in this Psalm: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste," &c.—"Thy word is pure, therefore doth thy servant love it," ver. 20, 72. This ardent love to the word results from a thorough belief of it; and is an infallible test by which we may try the genuineness of our faith.

4. *That he kept them in obedient practice.* This was undoubtedly what the Psalmist intended, as all the other particulars are necessarily presupposed in this. He thus kept them—*Sincerely*, ver. 80.—*Cheerfully*, ver. 47.—*Diligently*, ver. 69.—*Continually*, ver. 44.—and *Universally*, ver. 6.

Infer 1st. How wide a contrast between David's esteem for the Scriptures, and that noisy empty admiration of them which so many profess, but which is so uninfluential on their hearts and lives. They make fine speeches in their praise, and even contribute towards their circulation, while they neither understand nor believe, love nor practise, their all-important contents.

2. How carefully should we read and hear the word of God!

We should constantly drink at this sacred fountain—be always digging in this inexhaustible mine. “Search the Scriptures,” said our Lord. Let us then read them with *prayer, attention, and self-application*, and meditate on them like David, day and night.

3. How great are our obligations to God for sending us his word!

4. How heinous is the guilt of those who neglect and abuse it!

DELTA.

XI. ACKNOWLEDGING GOD.

PROVERBS iii. 6.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy steps.”

THE Bible is a complete system of directions—Directions divine in their origin, practical in their tendency, and important in their end—Directions suited to all persons, adapted to all capacities, and applicable to all circumstances. The Proverbs of Solomon, especially, abound with such directions; short sententious pieces of advice, generally understood, easily remembered, and not difficult to be practised; and among this important and comprehensive list of directions, I have selected the text, which commends itself to our attention, not only as suggesting a line of conduct necessary to be followed, but attended by a most consoling promise, to encourage us in the discharge of our duty. Two things therefore we will consider:

I. A CALL TO DUTY. *In all thy ways acknowledge him.*

II. AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO DUTY. *He shall direct thy paths.*

1. *Acknowledge God as thy King*, by conforming to his laws. There is no character that God is represented as sustaining more frequently referred to in the Bible, than that of a sovereign,

potentate, or ruler. As a King, he possesses infinite power—universal authority—and absolute dominion. As a King he has revealed laws; laws that relate to the government of our *minds*, Rom. xii. 2; Phil. ii. 5. To the government of our *tempers* Ephes. iv. 31, 32. To the government of our *conversation*, Ephes. iv. 29; Phil. i. 29: and to the government of our *conduct* as masters and servants, parents and children, husbands and wives. Acknowledge God by conforming to those laws: in order to this, read them often; study their character; bind them to your hearts; pray for assistance to keep them, and copy them in your lives.

2. *Acknowledge God as thy Benefactor*, by gratefully receiving his benefits. Even our daily bread is God's gift; but, especially, we are indebted to him for the blessings of redemption, the influence of the Holy Ghost, the light of revelation, and the promise of eternal life. As a benefactor, he bestows his bounties freely, diffusively, perpetually: there is a proneness in human nature, amidst the profusions of benefits with which we are favoured, to forget the benefactor, and abuse the benefits. Acknowledge God, by receiving his gifts gratefully; by keeping up in your hearts a lively recollection from whom they come and why they are given, and especially by improving them.

3. *Acknowledge God as thy Father*, by submitting to his paternal chastisements. This is one of the most endearing relations that God sustains,—“I will be a father unto you:” as a father he teaches us, protects us, provides for us, and chastens us, Deut. viii. 5; Heb. xii. 9, 10. Are you afflicted? acknowledge God, silently submit, Psalm xxxix. 9; and anticipate the happy result, Heb. xli. 11.

4. *Acknowledge God as thy model* by striving to copy his perfections. God made man in his own image; that image was lost by sin,—by regeneration it is restored to us; and Christians are obliged to be the imitators of God, Eph. v. 1; in the general benevolence of his character, Matt. v. 44, 45; in patiently bearing the insults of the ungodly, Psalm xcv. 10; and in his abhorrence of sin, Jer. xlv. 4. *This acknowledgment of God* should be SPIRITUAL: it must spring from the heart, and it implies the doing every thing with an eye to God, living under a continual sense of his presence: hence an inward change is absolutely necessary; “the carnal mind is enmity to God,” and unregenerate

men say to God, "depart from us." It should be **PRACTICAL**: *acknowledge God in thy ways*. It is not sufficient merely to have the heart right with God; but there must be a firm, manly, and public acknowledgment of him; we must confess him before men: in the primitive church, much stress was laid upon this, Rom. x. 9, 10. We should avoid all ostentatious parade on the one hand, and all cowardice and pusillanimity on the other. It should be **UNIVERSAL**,—*in all thy ways*. Are thy ways prosperous? Acknowledge that it is God who giveth thee power to get wealth, and use it to his glory:—feed the hungry, &c. Are thy ways adverse, dark, and intricate? Acknowledge God in thy poverty, and say, "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom," &c. Hab. iii. 17. Art thou about to go into other paths, and to form new connexions? Acknowledge God by consulting him, aiming at his glory, and setting the Lord always before thee, Psalm xvi. 8.

II. THE ENCOURAGEMENT TO DUTY. *He shall direct thy paths* Here is something implied, viz. That we need a director; and something expressed,—that God will direct us. The necessity of having a director will appear, 1st, from the natural blindness of the human mind: even that knowledge which qualifies man for usefulness, as a member of civil society, is uniformly attributed to God. The sacerdotal garments were made for Aaron by those whom God had filled with the spirit of wisdom, Exod. xxviii. 3. For the performance of cunning works about the tabernacle, Bezaleel was called by name, and filled with the Spirit of God; Exod. xxxi. 2, 3, 4. And when the ploughman casts in the principal wheat, his God instructs him to discretion, Isaiah xxviii. 24, 29. And can it be thought that God's direction is less necessary in guiding our feet into the way of peace?—2nd. *There are many specious paths, and delusive ways* that seem right, but the end thereof are the ways of death; ways that *seem right* either from their imposing appearance, or the public sanction they receive.—3rd. *There are many false guides and deceitful workers* who would direct you,—but where? Why, to the vortex of Antinomianism, or the gulf of Socinianism, or to the dangerous precipices of Pharisaism: added to this, there is the deceitfulness of sin, and the deceitfulness of the devil; all combining their influence to entice us to go into forbidden paths,

But the text not only implies that we need a director, but

expresses a most encouraging truth, that God will direct us. Three things would be desirable, in reference to a person who undertook to direct the paths of a traveller. 1st. An acquaintance with the road. 2nd. The communication of knowledge concerning it. 3rd. His presence and company in it. God will direct *thy paths*; he has a perfect knowledge of the way,—it is his way, Job. xxiii. 10; Ps. i. 6. He communicates knowledge concerning it; his word describes it, Isa. xxx. 21. He goes with us in the way, Exod. xxxiii. 14; Deut. xxxii. 10, 11, 12; Heb. xiii. 5. That God will direct our paths, if we acknowledge him, may be *inferred* from his nature, *proved* from his word, and *confirmed* by his conduct.

APPLICATION.

Learn 1st. All mankind are travellers, turning every one to their own way;— but where are we going? 2. How important to secure divine direction, and how reasonable the terms proposed in the text! 3. Our duty and interest are inseparable: acknowledge *God*, and he will direct *thee*. Amen.

BETA.

XII. THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

ISAIAH XXXV. 8—10.

“And an highway shall be there, and a way; and it shall be called, The way of holiness,” &c.

THIS chapter is remarkable for the beauty of its imagery; and more so, on account of the subject on which this imagery is employed.

Admitting that the prophet had in view the return of the Jews from captivity, we are nevertheless justified in referring his descriptions principally to those more important blessings connected with the advent of the Messiah, and with the Christian dispensation. Compare verses 5, 6, with Matt. xi. 5, and xv. 30, 31.

We are indeed carried on to the very rest in heaven that remaineth for the people of God; and our text beautifully describes the *way* that leads thither.

The Scriptures frequently speak of religion, or salvation, as *a way*. Thus we read of "God's way," Ps. lxxvii. 2; Matt. xxii. 16; Acts. xviii. 25, 26, of "the way of the just," Isa. xxvi. 7.—of "the good and the right way," 1 Sam. xii. 23, "of the old paths, the good way," Jer. vi. 16. Jesus calls himself "the way," John xiv. 6; and the apostle to the Hebrews mentions "the new and living way," chap. x. 20; and in our text the properties of this way are distinctly stated.

I. IT IS A HIGHWAY.

Highways are established by authority. So is the way of religion,—of salvation. God is its author and its founder; it is not a thing of man's invention, of human institution. See Micah vi. 8; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Luke xxiv. 47; Gal. i. 11, 12.

Highways are for general use. Thus they differ from ways leading to obscure places, and from paths that are merely for private purposes. The way of religion is the King's highway, where all his subjects, high and low, wise and ignorant, may walk. All the exclusive systems and ways, whether they are sanctioned by popes or others are not of God. And yet God's way, the way under consideration, is not common; for,

II. IT IS A HOLY WAY. "It shall be called *the way of holiness*, the unclean shall not pass over it."

Holiness is its peculiar name. Roads take their names from their founders,—from the place to which they lead,—or from the persons that frequent them. This way is called *holy* on all these accounts. The HOLY ONE of Israel constituted it. It leads to a place of holiness, Rev. xxi. 2, 10, 27; and none but holy persons can walk in it; for the unclean shall not pass over it." The profane, the immoral, the men devoted to the world, and those who make void the law, may *fancy* themselves in this way, may *talk* about it,—but "the unclean shall not pass over it." See Ps. xv. and xxiv. 3, 4; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Gal. v. 19—21; Eph. v. 5.

Every thing connected with the way is *holy*, and to whatever bad doctrines, unholy precepts, ungodly ministers, and bad professors belong, they do *not* belong to *God's way*.

We are, in the next place, led to take notice of the way under consideration, as,

III. A PLAIN WAY.

Interested Men in all ages, have endeavoured to persuade people, that the way of salvation is hard to be understood—difficult to teach. This may be a very proper account of *their way* but of *God's way* it is said, “A wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.”

Others are perpetually connecting worldly consequence, and worldly reputation, with this way, to make it suitable—for any but the humble. Let both the one and the other of these read attentively the following passages,—Matt. xi. 25; 1 Cor. i. 18—28; James ii. 5.

How *few*, how *plain*, how *excellent* are the doctrines, the precepts, and the institutions, of Christianity! And may not a man be sufficiently acquainted with a road,—with *this* road,—for the purpose of walking correctly in it; and for that of directing another therein; and yet be incapable of determining accurately the inclination of every ascent and descent, and the exact bearing of every turn? The way which *God* hath constituted is *plain*; and it is equally worthy of our attention as,

IV. A SAFE WAY. “No lion shall be there.”

The ideas are evidently taken from the dangers to which travellers are exposed in a country infested with beasts of prey: See Lev. xxvi. 6; Isa. xi. 9.

We may perceive the safety of this way, if we view it in contrast with that in which the wicked walk.

To what dangers are the wicked always exposed! Sin, Satan, death, and hell, are ready to devour or to destroy them.—But, “the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord;” Psalm xxxvii. 23. He “preserveth the way of his saints;” 1 Sam. ii. 9; Prov. ii. 8. Their bodies, their souls, and their circumstances are under God's gracious care, Psalm xci.; Matt. x. 30.

The safety of this way will appear if we consider it merely in itself. The enemies of the Christian may stand on either hand and threaten, but they dare not set a foot on this road:—“no ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there.” While a man keeps there he is invulnerable, and consequently safe; 1 Pet. iii. 13.; Ps. xci. 11—13.

One property more of this road remains to be considered; a property on account of which it must be highly desirable;—

V. IT IS THE WAY THAT LEADS DIRECTLY TO HEAVEN. The redeemed shall walk there, and shall return, and come to Zion," &c.

Heaven, as a state and as a place, is variously described in the word of God.

As a place it is *here* signified by "Zion." Zion was a hill connected with Jerusalem, on which stood the city of David, 2 Sam. v. 7, 9; 1 Kings viii. 1,—and the temple of Solomon, 2 Chron. iii. 1; Psalm ix. 11, and lxxxiv. 7, and lxxxvii. 2, 5, and cxxxii. *There* the priests officiated;—*there* the tribes of Israel worshipped God; Psalm lxxxiv. 7, 10;—*there* God manifested his presence, Psalm 1, 2; and the very place is described as beautiful: See Psalms xlviii., lxxxvii., and cxxii. On these accounts, the word "Zion" was used to denote the Church; and the *place*, because an emblem of Heaven—where the redeemed of the Lord will be kings and priests to God, Rev. xx. 6, and where they will serve him day and night in his temple, Rev. vii. 15.

As a state—Heaven, according to our text, is freedom from all suffering; and the possession of complete and everlasting joy. Mark the distinct ideas: sorrow and sighing shall flee away;—they shall obtain joy and gladness;—they shall sing;—and the joy that crowns them shall be everlasting. Think on Israel delivered out of Egypt (to which perhaps our text has some reference), or Israel returning from captivity, Ps. cxxxvi. See Rev. vii. 9—13.

Ye saints of God,—ye ransomed of the Lord,—ye travellers to Zion! yours is the way through which the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the saints of God in all ages, have gone to glory. Yours is no by-path; it is a *highway*, where a man may walk with boldness and freedom. *It is a holy way* of which none have any cause to be ashamed. It is a *plain way*, where people need not lose themselves. A *safe way*, where we may walk and not be afraid. Oh! never tire, never faint, and you shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy,

Ye despisers, ye neglecters of this way!—what sort of a way is yours? Have you firm footing? Your way is not such as men of clean hands, and of hearts right with God, are found in. Is it safe to walk in your way? Ah! Where will it end?

We might tell you in awful language;—but we would rather say “*Come with us, and we will do you good ; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.*”

GAMMA.

XIII. TRUST IN THE LORD RECOMMENDED

ISAIAH xl. 27—31.

“Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?” &c.

MAN, compassed about with infirmity, and born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, finds his need of foreign help ; but unhappily he expects and seeks it where it is not to be found, and reposes on the creature. In so doing he rests on a rotten prop ; and the more he leans the greater is his disappointment, and the more severe his fall. Yet the creatures possess commanding influence, because they “are seen ;” while God and the realities of the spiritual world are unseen. Hence the inspired writers so often call our attention to unseen things, and to the miserable state of those who build their hopes on false foundations ; and the security of the man whose God the Lord is, Jer. xvii. 6—8. These are also the sentiments expressed in our text. An Apostle has assured us that *all* Scripture is profitable for *doctrine*, &c. &c. We adopt this method in treating *this* Scripture ; and hear,

I. THE DOCTRINE TAUGHT. Not *every* doctrine that may by fair inference be deduced from it ; but a few leading and important ones. *First ; The existence of a supreme Creator.* “JEHOVAH, the Creator of the ends of the earth.” This doctrine is the ground-work of all religion ; and its truth may be demonstrated from creation itself. Every watch has had its maker ; every house its architect ; every effect has had an adequate cause. You suspend a chain, and although the upper links uphold the lower ones, yet the *whole chain* is upheld by your hand ; so in the great chain of effects and causes, we

ascend, and must ascend, till we reach the powerful hand that upholds the mighty whole. This Creator is “the *everlasting* God”—the present actual existence of his creatures proves this, for *nothing* can never be a cause; and had there never been a point of duration in which absolute *nothing* existed, and in which, consequently, there was no God, then neither God nor creature could ever come into being. But something now exists;—therefore, &c. Hence it follows that his existence is *uncaused*,—not *accidental*, but *necessary*; and therefore “from everlasting to everlasting he is GOD.” The stupendous fabric of the universe declares his *power*; and in small things, as well as in greater, (ver. 26), the suitableness of their parts to each other, and their adaptation to their final ends,—the eye for sight, the ear for hearing, &c.—proclaim his *wisdom*; yet most of his nature, perfections, and purposes is to be learned from his *word*. “Hast thou not known, hast thou not *heard*?”

Secondly; The doctrine of a superintending Providence. “He fainteth not, neither is weary.” “Why sayest thou, my way is *hid*, my judgment is *passed over*?” Some of the heathens placed happiness in indolence and ease; and therefore *they* supposed the Supreme Being to repose at his ease, unencumbered with the cares of government, having abandoned all things to blind chance. The Prophet, on the contrary, teaches, 1. That he is *not fatigued* with his superintendence. 2. That all is governed with *infinite wisdom*;—“There is no searching of his understanding.” 3. That he watches over all with the *tenderest solicitude*, ver. 29 and 31. Others taught, that gods and men and all things were under the influence of *uncontrollable* and *inexorable* fate. In opposition to which we are taught,

Thirdly; The efficacy of Religion. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew,” &c. God is *free*: he requires his *free* and *intelligent* creatures to acknowledge their dependence:—and in his *appointed* ways. But we proceed to,

II. THE REPROOF ADMINISTERED. The evident intention of these passages is to prescribe a *middle way*, between the two *extremes* of hurrying impatience on the one hand, and of careless indolence on the other. To be kept “in perfect peace,” is the privilege of him who *waits* upon the Lord, in the way of

his *providence*, and his *ordinances*; leaving the *time* and *manner* of events, and *events themselves*, to him. The man all impatience and anxiety does *not* wait; nor he who is so careless as to make no pious effort. A person who wants a favour from another, *waits* on him;—and waits *till* he can prefer his request, and obtain an answer. So far as we are found out of *this middle way* we are reprov'd, but reproof is in order to amendment. Hence we notice,

III. THE CORRECTION OFFERED. To correct is to make better—to make right. A child may be *punished* without being *corrected*; and it may be *corrected* without being *punished*. You perceive an error in your accounts or plans, and by *correction* make them *right*. Reproof points out our errors, and affords an opportunity of *correcting* our *distrust* of divine goodness; *presumption* in dictating; *impatience* in demanding *what*, and *how*, and *when* we pleased, &c.;—of correcting our *remissness* in waiting on the Lord in the way of his *ordinances*, by henceforth *consulting his will*, in the *written* and *preached* word; and making our request known to him, &c.;—our *lukewarmness*, by fervour;—our *weariness*, by perseverance;—and all our inproprieties of temper, word, and work. In order to which we observe,

IV. THE INSTRUCTION AFFORDED. Instruction supposes at least, a need of learning more perfectly what is useful; and is intended to qualify us for the duties of active life. The text instructs us, 1. To consider the Lord as the *only* proper object of worship, and of confidence. 2. *To expect confidently*, that our waiting on *Him* shall not be in vain:—We “shall renew strength;”—the *consequence* and *proof* of which will be ability to *bear* more temptation, &c., and to *do* more for God; and to *do it better*. 3. That *even in times of severest trial*, when “the young men shall utterly fall,” we may, “mount” *above* the world,—and having thrown off our oppression and fetters, may *look down* on this rolling, changing state of things, while we sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. 4. That we may make *rapid* and *delightful progress* in our religious course: not standing still, or creeping on, burdened and desponding; but, our duty being our delight, may “*run* and not be *weary*.” 5. That we may *persevere* in piety;—“walk and not faint.” Why, with so many means of grace and places of worship, is there

so little religious experience among us? Our churches and chapels are, in too many instances, *misnamed* "places of divine worship." We *confess* as much, when we propose to our neighbours, or ourselves, to "go and hear Mr. —." We "wait upon" the "fine man;" *not* "upon the Lord;" *therefore* we are unblest. *Here* also let us stand corrected. Warn the proud and the worldly, verse 22—25. Comfort the mourning penitent, verse 1. Encourage the timid and desponding, verse 27. Congratulate, confirm, and stimulate believers, Prov. iv. 18.

ZETA.

XIV. THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

ISAIAH liii. 10, 11.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him," &c.

OF all the prophetic writings, none contain more clear and correct predictions of Christ than those of Isaiah; and of all Isaiah's writings, none describe the Messiah more accurately, both in his suffering and exalted state, than this chapter. That the prophet here speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ, is evident from the words of the Holy Ghost in the New Testament. He applies verse the 4th to our Lord, Matt. viii. 16, 17.; he "healed all who were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." He applies verse the 5th to him, 1 Peter ii. 24. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." He applies verses the 7th and 8th to him, Acts viii. 32—35; "The place of the Scripture which he read, was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, so opened he not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away; and who shall

declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee of whom speaketh the prophet this; of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." This example teaches us, that we also may, and indeed should, preach Jesus from the words now before us. For here we find a most interesting description of his character, his sufferings, and the happy effects of his sufferings. We are led to observe,

1. HIS CHARACTER. He was God's righteous servant, of whom God had before spoken by this prophet; chap. xlii. 1. "Behold," &c.

1. *He was God's SERVANT*: who glorified God by obeying him, John xvii. 4. He served God *fully*:—his obedience was complete, Phil. ii. 8. "Being," &c. He served God *cheerfully*; with delight, Psalm xl. 7, 8; John iv. 34. He served God *constantly*, without intermission, John viii. 29. He served God *unweariedly*, till the work assigned him was done. He laboured on, and ceased not, till he was enabled to say, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do."

2. *He was God's RIGHTEOUS servant*: being unblameable in all his deportment, and never justly chargeable with sin. This appears—From the testimony of his *friends*; of Paul, 2 Cor. v. 21. "Who made," &c.; of Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 22. "Who did," &c.; and of John, 1 John iii. 5. "In him was no sin."—And from the testimony of his *enemies*. This was given by Judas, who betrayed him, Matt. xxvii. 3, 4. "Then Judas," &c.; by Pilate, who condemned him to death, Matt. xxvii. 24. "When Pilate saw," &c.; and by the centurion, whose soldiers crucified Christ: "Certainly," says he, "this was a righteous man; truly this man was the Son of God," Luke xxiii. 47; Mark xv. 39.

3. As God's RIGHTEOUS SERVANT, *he became a perfect example* and an *acceptable mediator*. A *perfect example* to all his followers, of piety towards God, love to mankind, and personal purity, Phil. ii. 5; 1 John ii. 6. And an *acceptable mediator*. For it was requisite that our High Priest should be harmless, Heb. vii. 26. "Such a high priest," &c. And

that our Advocate should be righteous, 1 John ii. 1. "We," &c. This was requisite, that God's righteousness might be declared in our salvation, Rom. iii. 25, 26. "Whom God," &c. Hence let us observe,

II. HIS SUFFERINGS. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him," &c. Here we learn,

1. *The extent of his sufferings.* He suffered, —In his *body*. He was bruised by cruel blows, Matt. xxvii. 30. "And they spit," &c.; he was wounded by the thorns, nails, and spear, verse 5; he endured stripes by scourging, ver. 5; compare John xix. 1. "Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged him." In his *soul*.—He was put to grief by the *sins of mankind*;—the cruelty of his avowed enemies; (see Psalm xxii. 14—16), and the treachery of his professing friends; of Judas, who betrayed him; of Peter, who denied him; and the other disciples, who forsook him, Matt. xxvi. 56; Zech. xiii. 6. He was also put to grief, *by diabolical suggestions*, Luke xxii. 53; Heb. ii. 18; *and by the suspension of divine comfort*, Matt. xxvi. 38. and xxvii. 46. We here learn,

2. *The singularity of his sufferings.* These being unlike those of others, he might properly adopt Jeremiah's language in another case, Lam. i. 12, for his sufferings were *unmerited*. He was perfectly righteous; and the only one who ever suffered without being sinful in nature or practice. His sufferings were *inflicted by God*; not merely by wicked men. God laid them on him, verse 6. God bruised him; put him to grief; and made his soul an offering for sin. Wicked men, indeed, were the instruments of his sufferings; but God gave him up to death, Acts ii. 23; Rom. vii. 32. His sufferings were *pleasing to God*. It pleased God to bruise him. He did not afflict Christ reluctantly, as he does his other children, Lam. iii. 22, 23. And yet our Lord *concurred* in his sufferings. His soul was made an offering for sin, readily, without hesitation; he poured out his soul unto death, as his own voluntary act and deed, verse 12; he laid down his life freely, not by compulsion, John x. 15, 18; Mark x. 45. Hence let us observe,

3. *The general nature of his sufferings.* They were evidently vicarious; or sufferings endured by him as a substitute for others.

He became an *offering* for the *sin* of others, in their stead, 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. iii. 18. He bore the iniquities of *others*, "He shall bear their iniquities," or the punishment due to their iniquities, by just desert; as the loss of divine comfort, the curse and death, Gal. iii. 13, 14. "Christ hath," &c. His sufferings were a "*travail*;" this implies that they were pains endured by him, for the benefit of others:—to make them heirs of glory, Heb. ii. 10; to heal them, Isa. liii. 5; and bring them to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. This leads us to consider,

III. THE HAPPY EFFECTS OF HIS SUFFERINGS. In consequence thereof,

1. *He shall prolong his days.* By rising from death to immortal life, Rev. i. 18. This was effected by himself; according to his own declarations, John ii. 19, and x. 18:—And it was the reward of his obedience unto death, Isaiah liii. 12; Phil. ii. 8—11.

2. *He shall justify many by his knowledge.* "By his knowledge," &c. This implies, that through or by the knowledge of him, many will obtain justification. By justification is meant the forgiveness of sins. Compare Acts xiii. 33 and 39. The knowledge of Christ includes a just view of him as the only acceptable mediator between God and men, John xiv. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 5; a cordial approbation of him, 1 Cor. ii. 2; and affiance in him, Psalm ix. 10. All who thus know him, are justified through and by him, Rom. v. 1; Acts xiii. 39.

3. *He shall see his seed:* or his posterity, the fruit of his travail. This shall be a *numerous* seed, Heb. ii. 10; Ps. ii. 8. and cx. 3.—and a *hopeful* seed; a general blessing, Matthew v. 13, 14; and finally happy, Isa. xxxv. 10. He shall *see* his seed; see them *flocking to him* for salvation, Isa. lx. 8; see them *saved by him* on earth, Isa. viii. 18; and *glorified with him* in heaven, Rev. iii. 21, and xvii. 14.

4. *The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.* The pleasure of the Lord is his church; the object of his delight, Isa. lxii. 4; Ps. cxlvii. 11. This is in Christ's hand; under his government and care, Deut. xxxiii. 3; John x. 27, 28. It shall prosper there; be kept uninjured, Matt. xvi. 18, and extend universally, Dan. ii. 44.

5. *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.* He shall witness the blessings enjoyed by his redeemed

servants: their interest in God's favour; their spiritual life, comfort, and honour, Rev. vii. 15—17. And seeing this, he will be well pleased that he has endured the curse, death, grief, and shame for them, Psalm xxxv. 27; Zeph. iii. 17. From Christ's sufferings,

1. *Learn your obligations to cultivate a spirit of contrition, or godly sorrow on account of sin.* Because your sins occasioned his sufferings at first, Zech. xii. 10. And they have since crucified him afresh, Heb. vi. 6; Psalm xxxviii. 18.

2. *Your encouragement, if penitent, to hope for salvation.* For Christ was given for your benefit, Rom. viii. 32; and is exalted for your benefit, Psalm lxviii. 18.

3. *God's claims on you as the subjects of redeeming grace.* On your services, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; Rom. xii. 1; Psalm cxvi. 16; your confidence, Isa. xii. 2; and your praise, Psalm cvii. 1, 2; Rev. i. 5, 6. "Unto him that loved us," &c.

ALPHA.

XV. THE KINGDOM OF THE MESSIAH.

JEREMIAH xxiii. 5.

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

THE prophetic writings are replete with appropriate and sublime descriptions of the personal appearing, redeeming works, and mediatorial offices of the promised Messiah. He is uniformly represented as sustaining every character, accomplishing every design, and possessing every qualification necessary to redeem and save mankind. Are we fallen, guilty sinners, ignorant of divine and spiritual subjects; morally impure, and under the dominion of sin and Satan? Jesus Christ was "wounded for our transgressions," is become the light of

the world, has opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness, and proclaimed liberty to the captive. And in every possible state and condition, he is a Saviour adapted to all our diversified necessities, and able to save to the uttermost. The text describes the Redeemer's character, as assuming human nature, and establishing his kingdom of grace; and directs our attention to the following important truths:—

I. THE PERSON OF THE MESSIAH. “Behold the days come,” &c. In these words we may observe three things relative to the promised Messiah. First, *His human incarnation*—“A Branch.” This term is often used by the prophets, to represent Christ's assumption of our nature, as “the seed of the woman,” according to the divine promise, Gen. iii. 15. To accomplish this and similar promises, the Lord declares in the text, “Behold the days come, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch.” The Father loved the world, promised, and actually “sent, his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, that we might live through him.” Thus, the Lord “raised” in the royal house and lineage of David “a Branch;” as it is written, “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” The scheme of redemption rendered it necessary for Christ to “take on him the seed of Abraham,” that he might suffer and die for our sins, Heb. ii. 10 and 17. Secondly, *His personal perfection*—“A righteous Branch.” In his *essential nature* as God, Jesus Christ was infinitely pure, holy, just, and good. And in his *human nature*, as man, he was perfectly righteous, and free from every thing sinful and impure. His manhood was similar to the perfect humanity of our original progenitors. Had not Christ been sinless, he could not have atoned for our sins. His enemies falsely accused him of sin, for both in his person and conduct he was “holy, harmless, and undefiled; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” Thirdly, *His sovereign character*—“A King shall reign.” The Jews were taught to expect their Messiah, as an illustrious Prince, and prosperous Monarch. But in general, they mistook the precise meaning of the prophets, and expected him as a *temporal*, and not as a *spiritual* Sovereign. He possessed every qualification requisite for the dignity of his character. He is infinite in wisdom, righteousness, power, and goodness. He is not only

a *Prophet* to instruct, a *Priest* to atone, but also a *King* to rule and save his people.

II. THE NATURE OF HIS KINGDOM. "A King shall reign and prosper," &c. The empire of Christ is of a complex character, and comprehends his vast dominion over all things, as the Creator and Preserver of mankind; and as the Redeemer and Saviour of them that believe. Considered in this extended view, the Messiah possesses:—First, *A universal kingdom*. His presence fills all space, and his power is unlimited. He reigns in his providence over all his creatures, and is the "King of kings, and Lord of lords." He is the Sovereign Proprietor of all things, and sways his sceptre both in heaven and in earth. All things are dependent on his power, and subject to his control, "who is over all, God blessed for ever." Secondly, *A mediatorial kingdom*. This refers to Christ's *official* character, as the "Mediator between God and man." Satan is denominated "the god of this world." His dominion is founded in sin and darkness, and leads to destruction. When Christ engaged in the cause of our redemption, he founded a kingdom of mediation for the salvation of mankind. This kingdom was partially revealed in the writings of Moses and the prophets; but is more perfectly made known in the ministration, doctrines, precepts, and promises of the Gospel, which is often called a *kingdom*. The Saviour reigns as the conqueror of all our enemies, as "the Prince of Peace, and the King of Zion," in his redeeming and mediatorial character, Phil. ii. 5—11. Thirdly, *A spiritual kingdom*. The kingdom which Christ established in the work of redemption, is designed in its *personal influence* to destroy sin, that "grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life." Our Lord declares, "the kingdom of God is *within you*." It is an eternal empire of grace, producing "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Fourthly, *A celestial kingdom*. Heaven is often denominated a *kingdom*, and is the promised inheritance of the Lord's faithful people, Luke xii. 32. The kingdom of grace here prepares and leads to the kingdom of glory hereafter. Christ waits to receive and welcome his followers into his everlasting kingdom, that they may participate his glory, dwell in his presence, and reign with him for ever. Such will

be the final honour and happiness of all the saints, Matt. xxv. 34; 2 Peter i. 11.

III THE CHARACTER OF HIS REIGN. "A King shall reign and prosper," &c. We may notice, First, *Christ's reign is legitimate*. He is no impostor. He reigns by natural and eternal right, as Sovereign of the universe; and as Mediator he reigns in the kingdom of grace, by *divine appointment, authority and sanction*. The kingdom of Christ is founded on principles of *sound reason*, and therefore all rational beings ought to submit to his government, Psalm ii. 12. Secondly, *Christ's reign is righteous*. He is a merciful and gracious Sovereign, and though he "executes judgment and justice in the earth," it is in *mercy and love* to mankind. All the administrations of his empire are equitable and just, kind and compassionate, though often mysterious to his people, Psalm xcvi. 2. Thirdly, *Christ's reign is prosperous*. Whatever opposition his kingdom meets with, *He shall prosper*. All the schemes he adopts, and the means he employs, are devised by *infinite wisdom* and accompanied by *omnipotent energy*; and therefore his designs must succeed, His perfections, declarations, promises, gospel, and Spirit, secure the prosperity of his cause, Heb. i. 8; Dan. ii. 44; John xvi. 8, &c. Fourthly, *Christ's reign is everlasting*. All other kings are mortal, and therefore die, and leave their dignities to their successors. All temporal kingdoms rise and fall, and will ultimately perish in the wreck of worlds; but Christ is the "King eternal and immortal, and his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation."—To improve the subject, consider the dignity of Christ's person and character; the folly and misery of his enemies; and the duty and happiness of his subjects.

ETA.

XVI. SINNERS RETURNING TO GOD.

JEREMIAH I. 4, 5.

“In those days, and in that time.”

IT appears evident from the preceding part of this chapter, that the verses now read primarily allude to the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity.

It is very probable that they have also a prophetic reference to a future alteration that shall take place in the situation and disposition of that people; but as they interestingly describe what is manifest in the return of sinners to God, we will use them to illustrate such a circumstance.

I. IN THOSE DAYS—THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SHALL COME, THEY AND THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH TOGETHER. There had been much dissension, and great enmity between these tribes, from the days of Rehoboam; see 1 Kings xii.; but it had been foretold, that they should again unite; see Isaiah xi. 13; Jer. iii. 18; Ezek. xxxvii. 16—22; Hos. i. 11; and here we behold them coming *together*. Thus it is with sinners when submitting to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, and yielding to divine influence; whatever was the distance, whatever the enmity existing between them before,—now, as with one accord, *they* come together to the house of God—to the throne of grace—to the Saviour of mankind. See Eph. ii. 13, 14.

II. GOING AND WEEPING. What an affecting sight! Whence have they come? Why do they weep? Whither are they going? They have left the land of their captivity, where they were aliens from God, servants to idolaters, slaves to their enemies; they have left the ways of sin, the company of the wicked, the service of the devil. Behold them *going*.

And as they go, they weep: not from regret that they are leaving scenes and circumstances to which they have been so long habituated; but rather, because they remained connected with them so long. They are affected by a sense of God's goodness to them, and by a consciousness of their ingratitude

towards God;—they weep on account of their sins; and the proof of their sincerity is manifest in their movement; for as they weep *they go*,—they leave their former sinful situation;—*and they are going*,

III. TO SEEK THE LORD THEIR GOD. The children of Israel and of Judah had wandered from Jehovah, the true God, the God of their fathers; they had provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, especially by the folly and the infamy of *idolatrous* practices; and God had left them for a while, captives in the *hands of idolaters*. But mixing mercy with judgment, “He remembered them in their low estate;” and here we find them again seeking *the Lord their God*.

Sinners *may* wander from God; but misery, infamy, and ruin will be the consequence; they *must* return again to God, or perish. And they *may* return: for oh, how kind are the words of *the Lord our God, of Jesus our Saviour*, to weeping, returning sinners! Hear them, Matt. xi. 28; Isaiah lv. 7, and lxi. 1, 3; Ps. cxxvi. 6. “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted,” Matt. v. 4. “Ye shall seek me, and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart,” Jer. xxix. 13. They are seeking,—but where shall they find the Lord their God?

IV. THEY ASK THE WAY TO ZION, WITH THEIR FACES THITHERWARD. Zion was the city of solemnities among the Jews, Isa. xxxiii. 20; and God was peculiarly present there; see Jer. viii. 19; Joel iii. 17; Jer. xxxi. 6. But *Zion* means the Church, Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14; Isa. xxviii. 16; and it is in his *Church* that God may always be found. So Jesus our Saviour promises, Matt. xviii. 20. Agreeably to this “*They* ask the way to *Zion*,” and as a proof that theirs is not an idle enquiry, they ask, “*with their faces thitherward*.” Their dispositions are turned towards God, and his people; their souls are inclined to religion and its ways.—Oh! that there may always be at hand persons able and willing to say, “This is the way, walk ye in it,” Isa. xxx. 21. Thus disposed, they next resolve,

V. COME, AND LET US JOIN OURSELVES TO THE LORD IN A PERPETUAL COVENANT, THAT SHALL NOT BE FORGOTTEN. They had been joined to idols, to sin, to wickedness. They had frequently said to each other, “Come, let us join” for pleasure,—for gain,—for secular, or for sinful

purposes; but now,—happy alteration!—they say, “Come, let us *join ourselves to the Lord.*”

The way of joining ourselves to the Lord, is—*spiritually*, by faith and by love, John i. 12; Eph. iii. 12; Gal. iii. 25; John xv:—*outwardly*, by connecting ourselves with God’s people; with them who “worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” Phil. iii. 3. See Acts ii. 42; 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

Some profess to be joined to the Lord, who hold no communion with his people. Others appear to think that they are sufficiently joined to the Lord, if they have left one Christian community, and joined another. Let such consult the following passages of Scripture; Mal. iii. 16; Heb. iii. 13; Rom. xii. 5; 1 Cor. xii. 13, 27; Matt. xxv. 1—13; Luke vi. 46; Rom. ii. 28, 29; Luke xiii. 25—29.

It is our being united to Christ, and his Church, as the branches are in the vine,—as the members are in the body,—as the stones are in the building, which will alone secure such stability and permanency, as the close of the text expresses.

“Let us join,” said they, “in *a perpetual covenant* that shall not be forgotten.” The Jews had made many covenants with God, but they had been notorious for covenant breaking. Recollecting their past unfaithfulness, they now resolve that their covenant shall be *perpetual*.

Alas! how often have we covenanted with God, and been perfidious! In sickness,—in danger,—in trouble,—when the terrors of the Lord have alarmed us,—we have resolved, we have promised; but our resolutions have been like a morning cloud, and as the early dew they have passed away, Hos. vi. 4. Why has it been thus? Perhaps we resolved in our own strength; we did not seek help from God. Let us now lament our past unfaithfulness; and in the strength of divine grace let us resolve anew—*Let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.*

Let me add,

Such setting out, such going on, as our text describes, promises fair for heaven.

Individuals here and there turning to God are blessed sights:

but when whole companies thus join to seek the Lord, the scene is glorious!

Oh for such days, such times as our text describes! when God's ancient people, the children of Israel and the children of Judah, shall come together. Yea, *when* "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." Isaiah ii. 2.

GAMMA.

XVII. THE FIRST HUSBAND.

HOSEA ii. 7.

"I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now."

HOSEA is one of the most ancient of all the Jewish prophets. In his day, the people of Israel were awfully corrupted; they had forsaken the Lord, joined themselves to idols, and fallen by their iniquity. Their idolatry is forcibly described by the prophet, under the image of a treacherous wife wickedly deserting her husband, while he is represented as using the most effectual means of bringing her back to himself: the preceding verses refer to those means, and the text reports their happy result; *I will go and return*, &c. Two things claim our attention in this passage;—

I. A RESOLUTION FORMED. *I will go*, &c.

Here we have, 1st. *A mystical union adverted to*. Sinners are far from God, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, &c. Eph. ii. 12; iv. 18; Col. i. 21. But saints are brought nigh to God, united to him, taken into covenant with him, &c. Various figures are used to represent the union which holy souls have with God; such as the union of the members with the head; of branches with the vine; and the wife with the husband, Isa. liv. 5; 1 Cor. xi. 3; Eph. v. 32. In a marriage union, we look for a *consent of parties*; on the Lord's side, this

is always certain: the gift of his Son, to die for us; his Spirit, to strive with us; and his ministers, to call us;—all proclaim his willingness to enter into union with us. But oh! strange as it may seem, sinners are unwilling to join themselves to the Lord; they have other lovers, to whom they are fondly wedded; and from whose embraces they can scarcely be prevailed upon to tear themselves. To the marriage union we attach *reciprocal affection*; mutual love is the bond of that covenant; and divine love is the principle that brings God down to us, and draws us near to him. God's love to his saints is voluntary, sympathizing, matchless, and perpetual: and their love to him is sincere, constant, and efficacious. In the marriage union we expect a *harmony of interest*: the husband and wife draw together; for this reason we call them yoke-fellows; their interests are consolidated, and blended into one: such is the harmony that subsists between God and his saints, that he deems all the insults that are poured upon them, as poured upon himself, Zech. ii. 8; Acts ix. 4. In their affliction he is afflicted; in their sorrows he feels; and with their griefs he sympathizes. And for his honour they are jealous: when his law is violated, they mourn; Psalm cxix. 136, 158; they have no interests but what are his; and no pleasure but in his approbation. From the marriage union we *anticipate a oneness of spirit*; this renders the conjugal state a source of mutual felicity; he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 13.

1. *A violation of this union acknowledged. I will go and return, &c.* Here is an indirect confession of unfaithfulness, To what cause could this be attributed? To a culpable inattention to divine instruction, chap. iv. 5, 6; Jer. xvii. 23. To a forgetfulness of the Divine law, chap. iv. 6, 10. How is this unfaithfulness evinced? By forming attachments to other objects; and paying that homage to idols which Jehovah alone had a right to receive, chap. iv. 12. By a violation of the covenant they had entered into with God, chap. iv. 7, viii. 1.

3. *A purpose to renew this union avowed. I will go, &c.* This purpose was *rationally founded*. Many make resolutions without reason; some sudden freak or momentary impulse urges them on; but they are forgotten as instantaneously as formed: the people of Israel had been disappointed; God had

hedged up their way with thorns, and the resolution in the text was founded on the most perfect conviction, that disappointment and misery would ever attend infidelity and apostacy. This purpose was *absolutely expressed*; "I will go," &c.

"This is the most positive form our language can assume: expression is the dress of thought;" nothing is more necessary in religion than decision of character; inconsistency ruins thousands; and if we have declined from the ways of the Lord, decision of mind should lead us individually to say, "I *will* go," we should say to ourselves, to God, to the Church, and to the world.

This purpose was *practically to be exemplified*, "I will go and return:" many resolve, and re-resolve, but die the same: they vow, but never perform their vows; they purpose, but never practise: the prodigal no sooner said, "I will arise and go," &c., than he arose and went; "go thou and do likewise," fix thy purpose, and be steady to it, act upon it, and exemplify it in thy life.

II. A REASON EXPRESSED, UPON WHICH THIS RESOLUTION IS FOUNDED; *For then it was better*, &c.

Self-love is a powerful principle, it is the main-spring of human actions; the doctrine of the text is, that fidelity to God is *relatively* better than apostacy from him: it is not only *better* in itself, considered in reference to God and society at large, but *better for me*. 1. *Better*, as it is more *honourable*. Religion is creditable to a man's *judgment*, as it shows that he can discriminate right from wrong: to his *heart*—it evinces that he is capable of feeling the force of truth, and of being moved by the charms of piety: to his *character*—it proves that his practice corresponds with his profession. Apostacy is disgraceful: consider the *agents* employed to effect it; the *principles* by which it is produced; and the *change* by which it is attended, 2. *Better*, as it is more *comfortable*. The comfort resulting from union with God, and steadfastness in his covenant, is *divine* in its origin, *satisfying* in its enjoyment, and *eternal* in its nature. If apostates possess any pleasure, it is the pleasure of sense and sin, which is *irrational* and *unsatisfactory* in its character—*grovelling* and *despicable* in its tendency—*uncertain* in its stay—and succeeded in its termination by a lasting and painful repentance. 3. *Better*,

as it is more *safe*. The safety of the saints who endured to the end, may be inferred *from the providence of God, the ministration of angels, the promises of grace, and the examples of those* who have finished their course with joy. But there can be no safety for those who have put themselves from under the wings of the divine protection; forfeited their claims to the promises of God; formed alliances with his foes; rallied round the standard of the devil; and done their utmost to "wipe off the blessed cross as a foul blot from their dishonoured brow."

INFER from the subject, 1st. How much saints should prize their privileges, how thankful they should be for them, and how careful not to forfeit them, by stretching out their hands to a strange god. 2nd. The folly of apostates, and the reasons they have for returning to their first husband. BETA.

XVIII. THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

LUKE xi. 13.

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

IN the imporant and instructive paragraph with which our text is connected, we find,

1. A pious request presented to our Lord by one of his disciples. 1st. "Lord, teach us to pray," &c. From this request it is conjectured, that John the Baptist, according to the usual custom of the Jewish teachers, had given his disciples certain forms of prayer to guide and assist their devotion. A similar favour from our Lord appears therefore to be thus requested by his disciples.

2. Our Lord's compliance with this request. "He said unto them, "When ye pray, say," &c. v. 2—4. Here we find those petitions used as a *form* of prayer, which had previously been recommended in the sermon on the mount as a *model* of

prayer. Thus we have the highest authority to use this prayer as a form.

3. An exhortation is subjoined to seek the blessings of salvation by importunate prayer. This is urged by the example of a friend, prevailed on by importunity to grant a favour, v. 5—9;—by the success of all earnest persevering supplicants, v. 10;—by the natural kindness of earthly parents, who do not give their children stones for bread, serpents for fishes, nor scorpions for eggs, v. 11, 12;—and in our text, by the infinite goodness of God; “If ye then,” &c. These words exhibit our privileges, prescribe our duty, and encourage our hope, as the followers of Christ.

I. These words EXHIBIT OUR PRIVILEGE as the followers of Christ. This is, to enjoy the gift of God’s Holy Spirit. Here let us observe,

1. *What is meant by the Holy Spirit.* This we may learn by noticing some particulars respecting the Holy Spirit, which we find recorded in the oracles of God. These inform us—that the Holy Spirit may be grieved; for we are cautioned against grieving him, Eph. iv. 30; that he intercedes for us Romans viii. 26, 27; that he reproves the world, John xvi. 7, 8; that he guides, hears, speaks, and shews things to come, John xvi. 13. Now to grieve, to intercede, to reprove, to guide, hear, speak, and shew things to come, are all personal acts; hence we are assured that the Holy Spirit is a *person*.

The scriptures also inform us, that the Holy Spirit is a person against whom unpardonable sin may be committed, Matt. xii. 31, 32; and to lie to the Holy Ghost, implies lying unto God, Acts v. 3, 4; and that those in whom the Holy Ghost dwells are temples of God, 1 Cor. iii. 16. Hereby we are assured that the Holy Spirit is a *divine* person, and truly God. And in this we are also confirmed by the divine ordinance of baptism, Matt. xxviii. 19; and by the apostolic benediction, 2. Cor. xiii. 14.

2. *That the Holy Ghost is enjoyed by all real Christians.* This is evident from the Apostle’s solemn declaration, Romans viii. 9. “If any man,” &c. It therefore follows that none can be Christ’s approved servants here, nor partakers of the glory hereafter, but those who have his Spirit; and that all who are truly his, enjoy this heavenly gift.—From our Lord’s

promise, John vii. 37—39. This assures us that all believers are invited to receive the Holy Spirit, and actually to enjoy his gracious influence. This is further evident from the description given us of gospel salvation, Tit. iii. 5, 6. Hence observe,

3. *For what purposes he is received by them.* They receive him—as a spirit of *penitence* and *prayer*; shewing them their sin and danger, Zechariah xii. 10; and exciting in them desires of salvation, Matthew v. 6.—As a Spirit of *power*; strengthening them, and enabling them to renounce sin, lay hold on Christ, bear their trials, overcome their enemies, and persevere in the path of piety, Ephesians iii. 16; Job xvii. 9.—As a Spirit of *comfort*; to inspire them with assurance and hope, Romans viii. 16, 17.—As a Spirit of *purity*; to cleanse them from all sinful practices, I Corinthians vi. 11: all sinful tempers, dispositions and imaginations, Ezek. xxxvi. 25—29.—As a Spirit of *wisdom*; to lead them in the way of righteousness, Romans viii. 14.—And as a Spirit of *fruitfulness*; by which they glorify God, Gal. v. 22, 23; John xv. 8. That we may obtain this gift, the words of our text,

II. PRESCRIBE OUR DUTY. This is, to ask as God requires.

1. *Ask sincerely*; in truth. The Lord is near to such as call upon him in truth, Psalm cxlv. 18. Call upon him, as this implies,—in the spirit of true repentance; considering, lamenting, confessing, and forsaking all sin. This God commands, Prov. 1. 23; and encourages, Acts ii. 38, 39;—and in the spirit of holy fervour, with desires and cries, Psalm cxlv. 19.

2. *Ask evangelically*; according to the gospel method of approaching God; with entire dependence on the mediation of Jesus Christ, John xiv. 6. For gospel salvation is the gift of God through Christ, and should be sought as such, Romans vi. 23; Col. iii. 17; John xiv. 14—16.

3. *Ask importunately*; with unceasing application; till you are filled with this heavenly gift as a Spirit of power, of purity, and of comfort, Ephesians v. 18. This importunity our Lord requires, Luke xi. 9; and it appears highly proper; for the gift of the Holy Spirit is an invaluable acquisition; it may be lost after having been enjoyed, Hebrews vi. 4, 6; it will be lost, if not carefully guarded, Rev. iii. 12. And most

probably, it would not be prized and guarded as it ought to be, if it had been given without our earnest importunity. Therefore, in requiring this, our Lord manifests the greatest kindness to us.

4. *Ask believingly*; in confident expectation of obtaining. To ask in doubt of success, when we ask as God requires, must dishonour him; by questioning his power, or goodness, or truth. Unbelief, therefore, renders prayers unavailing, James i. 5—7. To ask in faith, must consequently honour God, Rom. iv. 20, 21. Hence faith in prayer is required of us, Heb. x. 19—22. Thus also the words of the text,

III. ENCOURAGE OUR HOPE. “If ye then,” &c. Here we are led to notice.

1. *That mankind are naturally evil.* They are ignorant, and know but little; they are poor, and possess but little; they are selfish, and inclined to keep what they have for their own enjoyment, Tit. iii. 3.

2. *Yet they know how to give good gifts unto their children.* Good gifts; things suitable to their wants, and conducive to their welfare. They *give* them: freely, however unmerited; readily, without delay; unweariedly, though often repeated; cheerfully, with comfort to themselves. They *know* how to give them: they have sufficient ability to confer them; sufficient love to bestow them; sufficient wisdom to adapt them.

3. *But God is certainly your Father, if you ask the Holy Spirit as he requires.* Your Father, by regeneration, adoption, and covenant, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

4. *And God being your Father, you cannot fail of obtaining the gift of his Holy Spirit.* For he is your *heavenly* Father; all-sufficient to bestow this gift upon you, Gen. xiv. 22. He is your *covenant* Father; engaged to give it, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. He is a *good* Father; inclined by love to bless you, Rom. viii. 32. A *wise* Father; who knows how to adapt its various influences to your wants, Eph. i. 7, 8. And a *gracious* Father; disposed to give it freely, Rev. xxii. 17. This gift therefore is as certain as God’s power, his truth, his love, his wisdom, and grace.

APPLICATION.

1. *Recollect your privilege with suitable acts of piety, such as—self-examination.* Do you enjoy this gift as a Spirit

of penitence ? &c., 2 Cor. xiii. 5. *Humiliation* ; on account of your enjoying no more of it, James iv. 2, 8—10. *Holy care*, to cherish and improve what divine influence you enjoy. By obeying Christ, Rev. iii. 2 ; and imitating St. Paul, Phil. iii. 13, 14.

2. *Recollect your duty, with perseverance in it*, Col. iv. 2. Neither be discouraged by seeming delays, Heb. ii. 3 ; nor rest in present attainments, 2 Pet. i. 5—11, and iii. 14.

3. *Recollect your encouragement, with steadfast hope* of receiving the Holy Spirit in all its influences ; as a Spirit of prayer, penitence, power, &c., 1 Pet. v. 10, 11.

ALPHA.

XIX. SPIRITUAL DECLENSION.

LUKE xxii. 54.

“ Peter followed afar off.”

WHAT ! Peter—who had made such a noble confession of his Lord—who had always been so prompt and indefatigable in his cause—who had declared himself ready to die for his sake—does *Peter* now follow his Lord at a distance, like one ashamed to desert him, and yet afraid to stand by him ? —Yes, that man who appeared so ardent, confident, and heroic, now acts the part of a hesitating coward, and follows his Saviour “afar off !” This language not only describes the literal distance of his *person* from Christ, but indicates *the state of his heart*. His heart was distanced from him ; hence, although he did not totally forsake him, he followed with faint and faltering steps. But Peter has many imitators in the present day, of whom it may be said with equal propriety, They follow Jesus afar off. For their sakes, therefore, as well as to warn more faithful disciples, we will,

1. SURVEY THE DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF THAT DECLINING STATE OF DISCIPLESHIP REPRESENTED BY THE TEXT.

These are clearly exhibited in Peter, and we observe,

1. *That he still felt some attachment to his Master.* Without this he would not have followed him at all in such circumstances of danger. Indeed, considering how long and sincerely he had loved him, it would be unreasonable and contrary to nature, to imagine that he had all at once become indifferent to his Saviour.

Some degree of love is also found in those who follow Christ afar off now; indeed, no one can truly follow him without it. They love his name, his cause, his ways, his people. Jesus may say to them as to the Ephesian Angel, "I know thy works," &c. Rev. ii. 2, 3.

This love distinguishes this state from that of *formalists*, *hypocrites*, and *worldlings*. What follows will distinguish it from the state of more faithful Christians.

1. *That Peter's love was in a decaying condition.* Had it been warm and vigorous as formerly, no trouble nor danger would have kept him at a distance. But his love was now relaxed and paralyzed, and, though not wholly extinguished, it burnt with a languishing flame.

Such is the case with his modern imitators. Their love is waxing cold. Their holy ardours are damped and almost ready to expire. Comparative lukewarmness and indifference stamp the character of their devotions. No longer do they exclaim, "As the hart panteth for the water," &c.

2. *That Peter's heart was in an undecided, irresolute state.* It fluctuated to and fro, and halted betwixt two. He followed Christ because he loved him, but he *followed afar off*, because he did not love him with an *undivided heart*. The love of ease, honour, or life, combated the love of Jesus, and weakened its influence. He had too much generosity, and too much love to his Master, wholly to leave him—but he had too much *self-love* to sacrifice all for his sake. Unhappy case; torn by conflicting principles, not wholly subdued by either!

And such is the state of many loitering followers of the Saviour now, feeling it "worse than death their God to love, and not their God alone." Drawn different ways by

different objects—company—worldly prospects or cares—praise of men—influence of friends, &c. they do not follow the Lord *fully*, but are double-hearted and faint; unwilling to forsake the path of piety, yet walking therein with feeble, hesitating steps.

II. ADVERT TO ITS CAUSES. Most of these also may be seen in Peter. Particularly,

1. *Presumption*. Peter confided in his own strength. Hence his profession of greater attachment to Christ than the other disciples. Even when admonished by our Lord, he still appeared to rely upon himself: “Though I should die with thee,” &c.

Presumption on their own strength is usually the first step towards that declension which is observable in many modern Christians. They are not duly sensible of their helplessness, nor do they rely with all their hearts upon the Redeemer. Especially they neglect to solicit the divine aid in fervent prayer. Hence the Spirit of God is grieved: no wonder then that they follow afar off. “Pride goeth before destruction,” &c.

2. *Shame*. This was another cause which kept Peter afar off. Jesus was not now making his entry into Jerusalem amidst the hosannas of the multitude. Peter no doubt was conspicuous, and perhaps foremost on that honourable occasion: But Jesus was now led away as an ignominious impostor. Peter knew his innocence, but was ashamed to be seen in the company of a Master so much disgraced.

Similar shame is often the cause of modern declension. When Jesus is honoured and adored by his followers, many join in the exclamation, “Hosanna,” &c.; but when he is disgraced among the ungodly with whom they may have to converse, they are unwilling to appear very intimate with him. They are ashamed of him—in his *people*—in the *reproach of his cross*—in the *ordinances of religion*—before *relatives, superiors*, &c.

3. *Fear and worldly prudence*. These seem to have been the most immediate cause of Peter’s distance from Christ. Fear of personal danger, and worldly troubles, persecutions, &c.

And thus many modern disciples, when threatened with suffering for the sake of Christ, begin to shrink, hesitate, and

decline in their career. They do not fear death in his service, for this does not menace them; but they fear to lose some temporal good—to forfeit the esteem of men—or to incur their displeasure.

4. *Unbelief.* This was at the root of Peter's base and cowardly conduct. The eye of faith was almost closed, and flesh and blood prevailed.

Thus it is now: unbelief weakens the Saviour's attractions, obscures his glory, enervates the soul, darkens the mind, stupifies the feelings, and depresses the spirits.

III. REFLECT ON ITS CONSEQUENCES. These are awfully displayed in Peter.

1. *A dreadful fall.* Poor Peter's heart at length got so far from Jesus, that he could deny him with oaths and curses.

And what dreadful falls generally follow a declining state of discipleship in the present day! One falls into *outward crimes*; another into *covetousness*; another into *ensoriousness*, &c.

2. *Gross dishonour to the cause of Christ.* What an insult to the Saviour for his first apostle to be ashamed of him—to deny that he knew him! What a triumph for his enemies!

Deep reproach is still brought upon the sacred cause by those halting followers, when they lose their zeal, fall into sin, or manifest a worldly trifling spirit. The self-righteous and profane rejoice, and *Christ is wounded in the house of his friends*.

3. *Bitter remorse.* This is a certain consequence, especially where, as in Peter's case, the fall is scandalous. See Peter's tears.

"The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." Happy indeed if remorse be indulged in due time—if it lead to the cross of the injured Jesus. Too frequently, it is to be feared, repentance is resisted, and endless remorse in the flames of hell becomes the lot of the unhappy backslider.

Let me address,

1. A word of *reproof* to those who do not follow Christ at all.

2. A word of *excitement* to those who follow him afar off.

3. A word of *caution* to those who follow him closely.

DELTA.

XX. THE NEW BIRTH.

JOHN iii. 7.

"Ye must be born again."

THE text forms a part of an interesting evening conversation between Christ and Nicodemus; a conversation that turned on a most important topic; and a conversation that ultimately produced the happiest results, John xix. 39. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and a member of the Jewish council, which consisted of seventy senators, who assembled in a hall of the temple of Jerusalem, to deliberate and determine on affairs of importance, relative to the government of the nation. Of course, Nicodemus was a man of repute; a man of learning; and, most probably, a man of strictly moral character: but, alas! how ignorant! Yet he was willing to be taught: he entertained a high opinion of Christ, and he came to him for instruction. He came *by night*; whether shame prevented him from coming by day, or whether he deemed the evening more favourable to religious conversation, I dare not say. What was the subject of their discourse becomes now the theme of ours. Oh! that similar effects may be produced, while we consider the NATURE, the NECESSITY, and the EVIDENCES, of the *new birth*,

I. THE NATURE OF THE NEW BIRTH. In explaining what it is to *be born again*, we observe there are two general states described in the Bible; the one a state of darkness, depravity, and guilt; the other, a state of light, life, and liberty; and when God brings a man from his dark, dead, miserable state, into a state of purity, happiness, and salvation, he is then, in the Scripture sense of the term, *born again*. But we are not to suppose, that the change produced by the new birth is *physical*; we possess the same powers of body, and faculties of mind, afterwards as before: nor is it merely *relative*; by which we stand in a different relation to God, and sustain another character. But it is, 1st, a *divine change*; a change effected by supernatural agency.

hence the phrases *created anew, born of God, begotten again, born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible—not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*—are used in the Bible to describe it. 2. *It is an inward and radical change.* There are many changes that take place in the human character, which are merely superficial, produced only by selfish principles and leading to mercenary ends: but this change strikes its roots deep in the inmost recesses of the soul, and the man becomes a new creature: he was dead, but is now alive; was lost, but is now found; was far off, but is now brought nigh by the blood of Christ. 3. *This change is universal;* “all things are become new.” The *understanding* perceives new truths; the *will* receives a new bias; the *affections* embrace new objects; the *heart* is impressed with new feelings; and the whole *soul* is cast into a new mould.

II. THE NECESSITY OF THE NEW BIRTH. “Ye *must* be born again.” The term *must* is used, 1st, *to express a high degree of obligation*: thus, “a bishop *must* be blameless,” and Romans xiii. 5. In this sense, ye *must* be born again; that is, there is a high degree of obligation resting upon you, why you should be born again. You may infer this, from the authority and veracity of the speaker. Jesus Christ is “the faithful and true Witness;” and the text is his testimony—from the consideration, that, naturally, you were “altogether born in sin:” had your first birth been immaculate, the necessity might not have been so imperious, nor the obligation so great. 2nd, The term *must* is used *absolutely*, as connecting the cause with the effect, or the means with the end; thus, “He that cometh to God, *must* believe that he is.” In this sense, the text is to be understood, “ye *must* be born again;” it is morally impossible for you to be *happy* without it—or to glorify God without it. But especially, “except a man be born again he *cannot*”—it is not said, he *ought* not, nor *shall* not, but he *cannot*—“see the kingdom of God.” To see the kingdom, &c., is to enter into it: and an unregenerated man *cannot* enter, because he has no meetness for it. Is heaven a place? then it is a *holy city*; has it inhabitants? they are *holy angels*; is it a state? it is a state of holiness; and holiness is the qualification for admittance into heaven; but an unregenerated man is an unholy man. He *cannot*, he has no *title*:

by being born again, we become heirs of God; this gives us a legitimate title to our heavenly inheritance: without this, we have no just right, nor can we urge a single plea. He *cannot*, he has no promise: not a single promise that refers to the heavenly world can be rationally claimed by an unconverted man. But added to this—there is a reason why he *cannot*, which I feel almost at a loss to describe; shall I call it a physical reason, because of the absolute contrariety that exists between the moral qualities of an unregenerated man, and the absolute holiness of the heavenly world? Thus as fire and water, light and darkness, *cannot*, for certain indescribable reasons in the laws of nature, become one; so a man who is not born again, *cannot* see the kingdom of God.

III. THE EVIDENCES OF THE NEW BIRTH. These are of two kinds, *internal* and *external*. The first evidence is *intuitive*, arising from the testimony of the mind. Man is a conscious being; he has a certain perception of what passes within; hence any considerable change from pain to pleasure, or grief to joy, is perceived in the mind, by a sort of intuitive evidence, which answers that purpose to the mind, which the senses do to the body. The second evidence is *divine*, springing from the direct witness of the Holy Ghost, Romans viii. 16. The third evidence is *rational*, flowing from a full conviction, that we have the marks of those who are born of God: these are, First, *love to God*, 1 John iv. 7. Secondly, a *spiritual nature*, John iii. 6. Thirdly, victory over the world, 1 John v. 4. Fourthly, power over sin, 1 John iii. 9. The external evidences are, purity of conversation—and holiness of life.

APPLICATION. 1st. How utterly impossible it is to substitute any thing as an equivalent for the new birth. 2nd. How awfully those deceive themselves, who imagine that they were *born again* when they were baptized: the Church of England declares that baptism is only an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace; the outward form is water; and the inward part is a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; and yet many of her members substitute the form for the power, and the shadow for the substance. 3rd. How earnestly and faithfully should we examine ourselves, whether we are *born again*; and how importunately should we pray to God that he may create us anew in Christ Jesus.

BETA.

XXI. THE WATER OF LIFE.

JOHN iv. 14.

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst : but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

WHEN Jesus Christ came into the world he appeared in the character of a prophet, and "went about doing good." Sometimes he addressed vast multitudes of people, who followed him to behold his miraculous works, and to hear his astonishing discourses. At other times he entered into social conversation with individuals, and thus taught them the truths of the gospel by private intercourse. His general method of communicating divine knowledge was, to adopt and improve natural circumstances, and common occurrences of life, to the moral and religious instruction of his hearers. A striking instance of this nature is recorded in this chapter, with which the text has an immediate connexion. We are informed, that when Jesus left Judea, to visit Galilee, he went through Samaria; and when he came to "Jacob's well," near Sychar, he sat down, being weary with travelling. While he was resting here, a Samaritan woman came to draw water at this celebrated well, with whom he entered into an interesting conversation, which led her to believe in his Messiahship, and embrace his salvation. The whole narrative is highly instructive, and merits our serious attention; but the words of the text require our present consideration. The *water* Christ mentions, is the grace of God in the heart, or personal religion, which secures eternal life. In examining this subject we shall attend to the following particulars.

I. THE ORIGIN OF DIVINE GRACE. "The water that I shall give him," saith the Saviour. It is of the greatest importance to consider the *author* and *source* of our religion. Our salvation is of God through Christ, and is obtained by faith. That all-saving grace is thus divine in its origin appears—First, *From the demonstrations of reason.* Sound reason judges of a cause by the effects it produces. Thus Nicodemus

reasoned concerning the Messiah, when he said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." And if we judge of religion by the effects it produces on the hearts and lives of its possessors, we must conclude that its *supernatural operations* clearly demonstrate its *supernatural origin*, and divine character.—Secondly, *From the testimonies of Revelation*. The Scriptures represent man as a totally fallen and helpless creature, exposed to final destruction. But God loved the world, and gave his Son to redeem and save us. In Jesus Christ there is a plentitude of grace for the salvation of mankind, and through faith in his name, by the energies of his Spirit, "we receive of his fulness, and grace for grace." Thus the sacred writings ascribe all our salvation, in its *procurement, communication, and completion*, to "the God of all grace," Titus iii. 4—7; Eph. ii. 8, 9, &c.—Thirdly, *From the evidence of Christian experience*. All men in their natural state are subjects of moral darkness, guilt, depravity, disobedience, and condemnation. But as believers in Christ, we are "made free from sin, become servants of God, have our fruit unto holiness, and the end is everlasting life." This glorious change is not of human production, but accomplished by omnipotent power. And all real Christians experience the pious sentiment, and breathe the humble language of the apostle, when he said, "by the grace of God I am what I am." Thus it is evident, that salvation is divine in its origin and donation.

II. THE CHARACTER OF DIVINE GRACE. It is denominated *water*. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him," &c. This is a common metaphor used in the Scriptures, to describe the saving effects of the grace of God in them that believe. The propriety and import of this figure will appear, if we consider—First, *Divine grace possesses a cleansing virtue*. Water is used to purify and make clean. Our souls are naturally unholy, and defiled with sin. Divine grace changes the heart, and cleanses it from all moral defilement. This grace was purchased by the blood of Christ, and is personally applied by the Holy Ghost, when he saves us "by the washing of regeneration," and the implantation of the divine nature, Ezek. xxxvi.

25, 26.; Psalm li. 7.—Secondly, *Divine grace possesses a satisfying virtue.* Water satisfies the appetite of thirst, and refreshes the soul of the faint. Man is a moral being,—is endued with *moral* and *spiritual appetites*, which nothing *temporal* and *finite* is able to satiate. But religion is adapted to our immortal powers and desires,—supplies all our moral wants and necessities,—affords substantial happiness in life and death,—and secures eternal felicities beyond the grave. Therefore, “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.”—Thirdly, *Divine grace possesses a fertilizing virtue.* It is well known that water refreshes the earth, and makes it fertile and productive. And when the grace of God is introduced into the soul, it “breaks up the fallow ground of the heart,”—implants the principles of holiness,—fills the believer with the fruits of righteousness,—and makes him fruitful in every good word and work, Jer. xvii. 7, 8, &c.

III. THE INFLUENCE OF DIVINE GRACE. “But the water that I shall give him shall be in him,” &c. Religion is not external profession, but real personal enjoyment, influence, and power. Observe—First, *The influence of grace is internal and saving.* “It shall be *in him*,” It is not in outward form and appearance, but “*in him*.” Enlightening the mind, subduing the will, purifying the conscience, and sanctifying the affections. It is *in him*, creating a new heart, and a new spirit; producing the principles and habits of holiness; and reigning in all the internal empire of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.—Secondly, *The influence of grace is abundant and rigorous.* “A well of water springing up.” It is not a contracted pool of *dead*, but a bursting *well of living water*. When Christ dwells in the heart by his Spirit, he opens a fountain of grace that overflows the whole soul with the streams of mercy and salvation. It is the water of life *springing up*. Divine grace is a *living principle*, quickening and inspiring the soul with the *vital energies* of spiritual life. It springs up in all its experimental and practical operations, John vii. 37, 38.—Thirdly, *The influence of grace is heavenly and glorious.* “Springing up into everlasting life.” A state of grace is the principle, commencement, and earnest of glory hereafter. Grace *raises* the believer from sin and death, to desire, enjoy, and pursue immortal glories. It sancti-

fies, elevates, and inspires the soul with *a present participation* of divine life; and will ultimately *spring up into everlasting life*.—This subject reminds us of the divinity of the Saviour,—the necessity of personal religion,—and its intimate connexion with eternal happiness.

ETA.

XXII. CHIRST THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATER.

JOHN vii. 37, 38.

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying; If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

THE Jewish feast of tabernacles was appointed to be celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, answering to September. It lasted eight days; the first and last of which were peculiarly holy. During the whole time, the Jews were to dwell in tents and booths, in remembrance of their wanderings in the wilderness, Lev. xxiii. 34—39. On the last, the great day of this feast, it was customary for them to fetch water from the pool of Siloam: part of this they drank with loud acclamations of joy, in grateful commemoration of the mercy shown to their fathers, who were relieved by water from the rock; the rest they poured out as a drink-offering, all the people singing—*With joy*, &c. Isa. xii. 3. The Jews themselves tell us, that this ceremony had a reference to the promised effusion of the Holy Spirit in the days of the Messiah. On this interesting occasion, we find Jesus Christ preaching; and he takes advantage of the ceremony to proclaim himself to the multitude, as the true source of spiritual blessedness—*In the last*, &c. The subject of this address is *religion*,—pure and saving religion. It contains,

I. A DESCRIPTION OF ITS NATURE.

II. AN INVITATION TO ITS SOURCE.

III. A DIRECTION FOR ITS ATTAINMENT.

I. *A description of its nature.* The Scriptures make frequent use of metaphors: in our examination of them, two extremes are to be avoided—*abuse* and *neglect*. They must neither be tortured to misapplication, nor passed over in silence. We should endeavour to obtain the genuine meaning of the Holy Spirit. In this description Jesus Christ furnishes us with three ideas of religion. Its *residence*,—its *quality*,—and its *plenitude*.

1. Its *residence*; out of the belly, or *heart*, shall *flow*, &c.

This is invariably described as the only seat of true religion, where alone it can maintain its influence, and accomplish its designs. Here the Almighty commences his gracious operations, and opens that fountain which diffuses itself in streams of healing and sanctifying virtue. Experience is necessary to enjoyment. Religion thus shed abroad in the heart, will manifest itself in the life—*out of his belly shall flow rivers*, &c. Purity of principle will be expressed by piety of practice. Good affections will produce good actions. Thus the stream will show the nature of the fountain.—Religion will not only *evidence*, but *communicate* itself; others will be sanctified by its influence. Genuine piety is diffusive; like a swelling river, it will not only fill its own channel, but will also overflow its banks, and fertilize the surrounding country. A good man is a general blessing.

2. Its *quality*; *living water*. This is a favourite metaphor with the sacred writers; it should be understood and improved. It teaches us the *influence* and *perpetuity* of divine grace. It is purifying and refreshing in its influence; it washes away all the defilement of sin; and replenishes the soul with all the fruits of righteousness; it is *living* water; not only a *pure*, but a *perennial* spring,—always running,—*springing up into eternal life*.

Its *plenitude*; *rivers* of living water. A term more strongly expressive of plenitude could not have been selected. Divine grace flows in the richest abundance. It is not a *reservoir*, filled by the effort of mere human industry, and speedily exhausted. Nor is it a *pool* collected by showers, which, being stagnant, soon becomes corrupt, or is exhaled by the sun. It is a mighty river,

always flowing in plenteous streams, and furnishing a supply for every demand. Our text contains,

II. AN INVITATION TO THE SOURCE OF THIS RELIGION. *Jesus stood and cried, &c.* Let him come unto ME.—What a complex, but dignified character does the Redeemer exhibit; poor, yet making many rich. He is the source from whence all the streams of religion flow: all our springs are in him.

1. He is the *appointed source*. *It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.* All that have been replenished in every age and under every dispensation gratefully acknowledge him as the source, and exclaim,—*Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.* He procured all our blessings by his death: redeeming love heightens their value. Remember, the fountain was opened on Calvary;—the water of life flows mingled with the blood of the atonement.

2. He is the *sufficient source*. He raises no expectations which he cannot realize; makes no promises which he cannot perform; he possesses in himself enough for heaven and earth—for time and eternity. After all he has communicated, his store is not exhausted; millions have refreshed their thirsty souls at this fountain, but it still flows as plenteously as ever. It is now sending forth its streams for the healing of the nations: millions more will drink and live.

3. He is an *accessible source*. He stands and cries, &c. The invitation is general; *If any man thirst.* &c. Here is no exclusion, Rev. xxii. 17. This fountain always stands open: no man can roll a stone upon the mouth of it. All may now come;—Jesus Christ is present in this assembly, uttering the words of the text—*He stands and cries, &c.* Our text contains,

III. A DIRECTION FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF THIS RELIGION.

1. The disposition required—If any man *thirst*. The appetites of the body are frequently used to furnish us with ideas of the dispositions of the soul. Although the term here employed may have some reference to the indigent circumstances of the persons invited, yet it must chiefly apply to their *inclination*. It expresses deep conviction of want, and strong intensity of desire; none will ever apply to Christ till they feel that they cannot be saved without him. All thirst for happiness, but few obtain their object: they neglect the fountain of living water, &c.

2. The *conduct enjoined*—"Let him come unto me." "*He that believeth on me,*" &c. We must not attempt to attach two meanings to these terms; they both apply to the same person, and signify the same thing. Faith is the approach of the soul to Christ. We cannot form any notion of faith but by connecting it with its object, and observing its effects. It is a vigorous, active principle, uniting the soul to the Redeemer, and obtaining for it all the benefits and blessings of the atonement.

3. The *participation expressed*—"Let him come unto me, and *drink.*" In this approaching quality, faith displays its power and efficacy: and without this, it will avail nothing; for it is only by *drinking* that thirst can be allayed. Genuine religion is personal and experimental. In order to enjoyment, there must be *participation*: you may perish with *thirst* on the banks of a river, unless you apply yourself to *drink*. Let us come unto Christ and *drink*, &c.

EPSILON.

XXIII. THE IMPORTANT QUESTION.

JOHN ix. 35.

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

THE text contains an important question addressed by the Lord Jesus to a highly privileged individual, on a most memorable occasion. The question relates to the most essential article of the Christian religion,—faith in the Son of God. The individual was a man, who, though born blind, had recently received sight; and the occasion was, when the Jews had excommunicated him for attesting the truth. Whether we regard the *sentiments* which the disciples entertained concerning this blind beggar, v. 2, or the *means* used by the Redeemer to open his eyes, v. 6, 7. or the *combination* of the Jews against Christ, v. 22, or the cogent and rational argument

used by the poor man in vindication of his character, v. 30—33, the whole history is remarkable, and worthy a most attentive perusal. But the text at present demands our regard, and we will consider, 7

1. **THE NATURE OF THE QUESTION—***Dost thou believe?* &c. *To believe on the Son of God* implies, 1st, implicitly to credit the record which the inspired writers bore concerning him, especially concerning the divinity of his person, the merit of his sacrifice, and the power of his grace; that he is God over all, blessed for ever,—that he made his soul a sacrifice for sin,—and that he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him.

2. *To believe in the Son of God*, is to trust in him, Eph. i. 12, 13. Faith is simple credence, when it refers only to a single proposition; but when it relates to a promise made by a benefactor to a starving mendicant, or a judge to a condemned culprit, it amounts to trust, confidence, and dependence. Christ is our sovereign benefactor; the benefits which he bestows are dearly purchased,—highly valued,—freely offered,—and graciously promised; but promised only to the children of faith: we must trust in Christ for their reception, and according to our faith so will it be done unto us.

3. *To believe in the Son of God*, is to receive him, John i. 12. Jesus Christ, in Matt. xii. 29, compares the soul of man to a house, and in Luke xi. 21, to a palace, a palace once glorious as the residence of the Deity, but now possessed by other inmates, and controlled by other lords, Isa. xxvi. 13; Matt. xv. 19, 20. But at the door of this palace Christ knocks for entrance, and all believers receive him, and receive him by the act of faith which perceives his excellencies, admires the suitableness of his character, and expands the powers of the soul for his reception.

4. *To believe in the Son of God*, is to realize his gracious presence. Faith in this sense supplies the place of vision; by it we behold the Lamb of God, John i. 29; 2 Cor. iii. 18; Heb. xi. 27. Such is the nature of the question: let us,

II. OFFER SOME HELPS TO ASSIST YOU IN ANSWERING IT.

1. Faith is a *divine principle*; and if you *believe in the Son of God*, the power to do so was divinely bestowed, in answer to your earnest and importunate prayers. You were

once without Christ; you knew him not; you reposed no confidence in him; but you was roused from your sinful slumber; your eyes were opened, you saw your dreadful danger; Christ was proposed to you in all the dignity of his person, and in all the efficacy of his sacrifice: for a while you doubted and disbelieved; but you prayed, and said, "Lord, help thou my unbelief;" and at last you were enabled to cry, in the language of believing Thomas, "My Lord, and my God!"

2. Faith is a *self-evident principle*; and if you *believe in the Son of God*, you cannot but know it; 1 John v. 10. Is faith credence; and cannot you know whether you believe the attestation of a fact? Is faith reliance; and cannot you know whether you depend on the veracity of him who has pledged his word to you? That doctrine which teaches that a man may *believe in the Son of God*, and not know it, is as contrary to sound divinity as it is to sound sense, as the Bible uniformly attributes effects to faith; and if the effects be not produced, the cause is not in action.

3. Faith is a *victorious principle*; and if you *believe in the Son of God*, you will conquer every adverse power, and put to flight the armies of the aliens. The records in the 11th chapter of Hebrews sufficiently confirm this truth. Do the sophisms of infidelity seek to beguile you? Faith will detect and dissipate them. Do the fiery darts of the devil assail you? Faith will quench them. Does the world spread its allurements before your eyes? Faith will vanquish them, Ephesians vi. 16; 1 John v. 4.

4. Faith is a *practical principle*; and if you *believe in the Son of God*, your lives will evince the genuineness of your faith. Believe in Christ, and you will love him, for faith worketh by love; you will keep his commandments, for faith without works is dead; you will endure to the end, for the end of your faith is the salvation of your souls. Believe in Christ, and his ineffable beauties will attract your desires; his spotless life will excite your emulation; his dying love will melt your hearts; his precious blood will purge your consciences; his meritorious death will expiate your crimes; and his glorious resurrection will ensure your immortality.

III. STATE SOME REASONS WHY AN ANSWER SHOULD BE GIVEN.

1. The *question is important*; the person who promises it is thy Sovereign, thy Saviour, and thy Judge. He is head over all things, and therefore has an indisputable right to propose this question. It is not impertinent nor unnecessary; it concerns thy *faith*,—that faith which has wrought such wonders, obtained such victories, silenced such misgivings, and without which thou must die in thy sins, and suffer the damnation of hell, John viii. 24; Mark xvi. 16.

2. The *question is personal*; “Dost *thou* believe?” &c. Do not shift it off; it is not whether thy neighbours believe, but whether *thou* believest; not whether thou hast a profession, a name, an opinion, but whether thou hast faith.

3. The *question is simple*; not complex, involving results that require the exercise of genius to solve. Many questions are so enwrapped in mystery, and have such bearings on other subjects, that we are obliged to pause, hesitate, and ponder, before we can produce an appropriate answer; but the question in the text is so plain, that a child, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, may answer it.

4. But *the question is doubtful*: all men have not faith; some glory in their infidelity: examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. Dost *thou believe in the Son of God?* then worship him, verse 38.—Pray for an increase of faith, and anticipate the period when faith shall be lost in sight, and hope in all fruition.

BETA.

XXIV. THE FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST.

JOHN XV. 14.

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

MAN is formed for society, and eminently qualified to receive and impart pleasure in social intercourse. The pleasure thus reciprocated is the purest and most refined which the

human mind can participate in this terrestrial region. But alas! where do we behold friendship so sincere and disinterested, so faithful and constant, as to yield all that felicity which we are disposed to anticipate from so promising a source? In how many instances must friendship fail, and leave us to struggle alone! How many circumstances will place us beyond the reach of human help, and leave our friends, like those of Job, the silent spectators of our misery! Where then shall we go?—to whom shall we apply? We will enter our closets; prostrate ourselves before the throne of grace; and open the book of inspiration; where we shall meet with the animating assurance—that *there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother—one who is born for adversity*. This is the adorable, but condescending Friend, by whom we are addressed in the words of our text. What a delightful picture of friendship was displayed by the union of Christ and his disciples! He still liveth, and is willing to become *our* Friend. Let us aim at so peculiar a favour, and rise to so distinguishing an honour, as *the friendship of Christ*.—Observe,

I. THE CHARACTERS BY WHICH IT IS DISTINGUISHED.

II. THE CONDUCT BY WHICH IT MUST BE SECURED.

III. THE MANNER IN WHICH IT SHOULD BE IMPROVED.

I. *The characters by which it is distinguished.* This is a friendship of the noblest and most exalted kind. Although it necessarily includes several emotions of the heart essential to pure human friendship, yet it raises them higher than any other principle would warrant or allow, and separates them from that dross which mingles with all our earthly enjoyments. It is friendship founded in esteem, regulated by judgment, and cemented by experience. But it is something more than all this; it has characters peculiar to itself: it is distinguished,

1. *By exalted purity.* As it is founded in esteem, that esteem must consequently be proportioned to the character of the person by whom it has been excited. Jesus Christ merits our highest esteem, as being altogether lovely; combining in himself every excellence; possessing every qualification necessary to make us perfectly happy. We recollect what he *has* done for us; we feel what he is *now* doing for us; we anticipate what he has *promised* to do for us. Hence our esteem is

grateful—holy—reverential. It will not admit of any irreverence, either in action or expression. It covers the soul with humility, while it inspires it with love. This divine friendship is distinguished,

2. *By confidential intercourse.* This is the very life and soul of friendship, without which it is a mere name, a vain pretence. It has been defined as one soul in two bodies. All difference of situation and circumstances is lost sight of in the intercourse of friendship. If such a union be formed between persons separated by rank and talents, in order to free and familiar intercourse, there must be great condescension on the one part, which requires from the other respect and deference. In the friendship of Christ there is the most amazing condescension. He descends from the summit of his glory, dissipates our fears, and invites our confidence. He raises us to the most sacred and sanctifying communion with himself: in this the Christian delights. He unbosoms himself to his adored Friend, and feels the purest pleasure, Ephesians ii. 6.

3. *By permanent sufficiency.* How feeble and fluctuating are earthly friends—how all-sufficient is Jesus Christ! *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead—and out of this fulness we may all receive, &c.* He is adequate to all our wants—able to save unto the uttermost. No enemy can vanquish him—no circumstances can place us beyond the reach of his friendly aid. His eyes are always upon his friends, and his hands are open to them. He attends them through every changing scene; and leaves them not when they enter the dark vale of death. He becomes their portion for ever.

II. *The conduct by which it must be secured.* We can only obtain the friendship of Christ by *obedience*. *If ye do whatsoever, &c.* This was repeatedly urged by Christ as the proper test of attachment—more eloquent than mere profession—more satisfactory than occasional tears, John xiv. 15. This was the trial of Abraham's affection—this formed and distinguished the characters of the saints. Let us examine the nature of this obedience.

1. It must be *affectionate*,—the spontaneous result of *love*. No other kind of obedience can be admitted in friendship. The obedience of fear may do for a *servant*, but not for a

friend; here all must be free and unconstrained. Love will operate as an active principle, rendering obedience *delightful*. An opportunity to serve a friend is embraced with avidity, and improved with diligence—*Ye are my friends*, &c. This cannot be the case with us till the love of Christ has taken possession of our breasts, 1 John iv. 19.

2. It must be *universal*,—*Whatsoever I command*, &c. As the authority of Christ is the ground of our obedience, so his will must be the rule, &c. How many keep his commandments *partially*! They consult their inclinations, and yield to their evil propensities, instead of surrendering themselves entirely to the will of Christ. You call Christ your friend: examine yourselves by this rule—at home and abroad—in public and in private, &c.

3. It must be *faithful*; that is, constant and persevering. In all circumstances, and through all opposition—even when exposed to contempt, and subject to privations—let your friendship be *immortalized*. Can you bear the idea of separation from your divine Friend? You shudder at the apprehension of so dreadful a calamity. Holiness will preserve you, for nothing but sin can dissolve this union.—St. Paul challenges the universe, Rom. viii. 38.

III. *The manner in which it should be improved*. When we have obtained a faithful, powerful friend, we should value him, and endeavour to improve such friendship to the uttermost. How capable of improvement is our friendship with Christ!

1. By *cultivation*. Be much in the company of your adorable Redeemer. Cherish with the greatest care every disposition favourable to intercourse with him. Repose the most implicit confidence in him. Consecrate yourselves entirely to him.

2. By *imitation*. Observe him as your *pattern*. Let your life be copied from this model of excellence: the society of friends has an assimilating influence. Let this be the case with you: imbibe and display the mind of Christ.

3. By *anticipation*. He is gone to prepare a place for you, and because he lives you will live also. Improve the thought. Look at death as the way to his embrace: your departing spirit shall step out of its earthly abode into the arms of its God and Saviour.

EPSILON.

XXV. CHRIST A FRIEND.

JOHN XV. 15.

“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

SINCERE friendship conduces much to the comfort and happiness of the present life. Man is made a social being, and therefore it would be more desirable to have no existence than to exist without a friend. What pleasure could any rational creature enjoy, if he were conscious that the numberless beings which surround him, both visible and invisible, were his settled enemies, and that he has no friend, human or divine, in heaven or earth? Is not the picture of such an abject character seen in disconsolate Cain, who supposed that every one who saw him would attempt to slay him; and who was a continual prey to his own distressing apprehensions? But fallen and degraded as we are, there is no need that we should be desolate and friendless; for though we have enemies, it is certain we may have friends. But it is often difficult to distinguish between real and nominal friends, for many profess friendship who are our secret enemies. However, the speaker in the text has proved himself to be a real friend to our best interests; and therefore there can be no danger, but infinite advantage, in becoming his decided friends. In spiritual acquaintance and union with the Saviour there is both honour and happiness, for he said unto his disciples, *Henceforth*, &c. We shall consider,

I. THE SUBJECTS OF CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP. “I call you not servants; but I have called you friends.” Jesus Christ is the universal friend of sinners, as the Redeemer of the world, and the benefactor of mankind. But all men are not his friends; for none are admitted into his gracious friendship, except they become his followers.

First, *The friends of Christ* know him. All true friendship is founded in knowledge, for we can have no intimacy with an unknown being. Christians know Christ not only in *theory*,

according to 'the letter of the gospel, but also *spiritually*, by the operations of the Holy Ghost. This knowledge is transforming, influential, and saving, and leads to intimate and increasing acquaintance with the Saviour, 2 Corinthians iii. 18; John xvii. 3.—Secondly, *The friends of Christ RECEIVE him*. The Jewish nation did not receive him as their Messiah; "but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." We must receive him *by faith* in his justifying offices, and sanctifying graces, as our Saviour; and into our hearts *by his Spirit*, as our portion, Col. ii. 6; Eph. iii. 17.—Thirdly, *The friends of Christ LOVE him*. Love is the great bond and life of real friendship. All external profession of personal esteem, without pure and unfeigned love, is only hypocritical deception. But the followers of Christ love him with sincere and supreme affection. His love is shed abroad in their hearts, and they uniformly manifest their attachment to him by obeying his precepts, and in zeal for his cause, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.—Fourthly, *The friends of Christ SERVE him*. They esteem it their highest honour to be ranked among his servants and friends. His service is not incompatible with his favour and friendship. It is perfect freedom and pleasantness. We cannot be his friends unless we become his servants. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Obedience to Christ is the natural result and practical test of our love and acquaintance with him, John xiv. 23; I John v. 3.

II. THE PROPERTIES OF CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP. "I have called you friends," &c. The friendship of Christ possesses qualities which ought to render it both desirable and important to every rational being.

First, *It is faithful in its nature*. Professed human friends often prove insincere and treacherous. Man is mutable, and even his strongest attachments may degenerate into enmity and opposition. But Jesus Christ is a sincere and unchangeable friend, and can never be unfaithful. He is a friend in need, and "sticketh closeth than a brother."—Secondly, *It is essential to our best interests*. Human friendships are *partially* beneficial, and therefore should be cultivated; but the friendship of Christ is *indispensable*, and involves our present and immortal welfare. His enemies must perish in their sins, but his friends he will

receive into his everlasting kingdom, Matthew xxv. 34 and 41.—Thirdly, *It is invaluable in its benefits.* Christ's friendship is superior to all others, because he is the greatest and the best of all beings. Our earthly friends may be sincere and kind; but they are *imperfect* and *finite*. But our heavenly friend is *infinite* in wisdom, power, and goodness; is every where present, and is both able and willing to save us from every evil, and bless us with every needful good, Col. i. 19; John i. 16.—Fourthly, *It is honourable in its character.* Friendship with superiors confers dignity, and is highly esteemed among men. But how great is the honour of being the friends of Christ, who is "the King of kings, and the Lord of lords!" And such an honour have all the saints, Prov. iii. 16; John xii. 26.—Fifthly, *It is perpetual in its duration.* All other friends die, and mortal friendships, however close, must soon be dissolved. But the Saviour is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Death cannot *separate* between him and his friends; but will introduce them to a more perfect union in his eternal presence, John xiv. 2, 3.

III. THE EVIDENCES OF CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP. "I have called you friends; for all things," &c. The Redeemer's friendship appears, First, *In his personal regard and conduct.* We are told, that "greater love can no man have than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." But Jesus Christ *loved* us, and *died* for us, while we were yet *sinners* and not friends, John x. 11.—Secondly, *In the communication of his various favours.* Christ is both the friend and the Saviour of his people. Through him they obtain pardon, peace, holiness, and every spiritual blessing, Eph. i. 3. He is a *real* friend in every time of need. When all other friends and helps fail, he will supply all our wants, and never forsake us.—Thirdly, *In the gracious promises he has given.* As a kind friend, Christ has given unto his people "exceeding great and precious promises," which secure to them every blessing in life,—support and comfort in death,—and eternal glory in the world to come. He will faithfully accomplish all his promises, and thus manifest his friendship and loving-kindness to them that love him. We may conclude by the way of enquiry,—exhortation,—congratulation,—and encouragement.

ETA.

XXVI. SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD.

JOHN XV. 19.

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

THE circumstances associated with the delivery of our text were of the most affecting and impressive kind. Jesus Christ was on his way to Gethsemane, surrounded by his disciples, going as the great High Priest of the world, to officiate at the altar of his own cross: he saw the whole process of his sufferings, but he hesitated not: his disciples anticipated the heart-rending scene, for he had disclosed it to them. What a bereavement they were about to suffer! Who can describe the agonizing anguish of their souls? Sorrow filled their hearts. Jesus Christ would not allow them to occupy the few remaining moments of his life in fruitless lamentation: he filled them up with instruction the most suitable and seasonable: every sentiment was drawn from his heart. He was about to leave his disciples in a world of dangers and snares; lambs exposed to ravening wolves. He warns them of their danger—directs them how to conduct themselves—and opens to them the most abundant sources of encouragement and support. In our text, he assigns the reasons of the world's enmity—“If ye were,” &c.

In the improvement of these words we will endeavour,

I. TO EXAMINE THE TRUTH HERE ASSERTED.

II. TO ASCERTAIN THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH IT IS FOUNDED.

III. TO OBSERVE THE CONSEQUENCE WITH WHICH IT IS FOLLOWED.

1. *To examine the truth here asserted—Ye are not of the world.* This truth must be *qualified* and *explained*.

First, *Qualified*. It does not imply that Christians are to be totally and entirely secluded from the world;—a different course is marked out for them—they are to survey the world, not only as the object of their dread, but as the subject of their pity, and the theatre of their usefulness. While there is

much to be *feared*, there is much to be *learned*—much to be *performed*. Hence Christ, in praying for his disciples, says, “I pray not,” &c. chap. xvii. 15. We cannot live *for* men, without living *with* men. But there are several respects in which Christians are not of the world, and therefore the truth contained in the text must be,

Secondly, *Explained*. Christians are not of the world as it regards *association—disposition—and destination*.

1. Christians are not of the world as it regards *association*. Although it is both lawful and necessary to associate with the men of the world in many cases, yet they will never be selected as *friends* and *companions*. A Christian is required, by his profession, to leave the world, 2 Cor. vi. 17; he is prohibited from friendly intercourse, by the authority of God, James iv. 4. His own religious prosperity depends, in a great measure, upon circumspection in this particular: he cannot mingle with the men of the world without resembling them. They are infectious, and will communicate to others their own fatal disease;—thousands have perished by an improper intercourse with the world.—*Beware of men*.

2. Christians are not of the world as it regards *disposition*. St. John says, “Love not,” &c., 1 John ii. 15, 16. This reason is strong and impressive, and appeals directly to the disposition of a Christian. He cannot comfortably conform to the world; he has a new, a heavenly nature, by the impulse of which his heart is drawn from the world. A propensity to indulge in worldly company is a decided proof of the absence of Christian temper and moral taste.

3. Christians are not of this world as it regards *destination*. The Christian is invariably described as having nothing more to do with this world, than merely to pass through it as the wilderness which lies between him and the promised land. All he asks, is permission quietly to pursue his journey home: he wants but little by the way, and *manifestly* declares, that he seeks another country—his inheritance is in reversion. How wide the difference between an earthly and a heavenly portion—witness the great change produced by death in Dives and Lazarus.

II. LET US ASCERTAIN THE PRINCIPLE ON WHICH THIS SEPARATION IS FOUNDED—“I have chosen,” &c. This is the

only fair and legitimate ground of separation from the world. How many flee from it under the influence of disappointment and vexation! It is by the power of religion that a moral separation is effected, and this is the work of Christ. Let us remark the *equity*—the *mercy*—and the *purity*, of this Divine act.

1. The *equity*. This is observable both in its *authority* and *execution*. His authority is derived from the atonement he made by the sacrifice of himself; the great design of which was to *separate* and *sanctify* a people peculiarly his own, over whom he might reign, and among whom he might dwell, Titus ii. 14. Its *execution* is the result of a compliance with his will. They who accept the blessings offered in the Gospel, and yield to its influence, are chosen out of the world to be a holy people.

2. Observe the *mercy* of this act. Jesus Christ knows it is absolutely necessary, both for our safety and happiness. He beholds the world under the dominion of sin and Satan, and consequently doomed to destruction—and in mercy opens to us a door of escape. He commands us to separate ourselves from the workers of iniquity, lest we share their plagues: he sends us religion as an angel to take us by the hand, and lead us forth into an asylum of safety, &c.

3. Observe the *purity* of this act: Jesus Christ was not of this world—he was “holy, harmless,” &c. He sanctified himself for our sakes, that we might be holy. On this principle he founded the infant church; and on the same principle he still directs and governs that church, in its more matured state. It cannot, it will not, bend to the maxims and customs of the world. Jesus Christ has placed a mighty interval between the church and the world; and he will maintain it.

III. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCE WITH WHICH THIS SEPARATION IS FOLLOWED—*The world hateth you*. This is a fact established by the whole history of the church. It was repeatedly predicted; and the accomplishment has been recorded in characters of blood. This hatred arises from *three causes*,—

1. *The state of the world*. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and expresses itself by hating his children. While human nature is what it is, it will oppose goodness in every form. Persecutions will always exist more or less—either of the hand, or the tongue, or the heart.

2. *The prince of the world.* He is the father of all evil : he first separated the world from God, and has ever since laboured to maintain that separation : he inspires his agents with a restless determined hatred to God and his cause.

3. *The character of Christians.* "If ye were of the world," &c. Christians are not only totally dissimilar from the world, but in spirit and conduct directly opposed to it.. The world loves darkness ; Christians will shine, &c. Religion is from above, and cannot commix with the world.

EPSILON.

XXVII. EVANGELICAL PREACHING.

Acts ii. 37.

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in the heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

PREACHING has ever been the principal means used for diffusing a knowledge of Christianity.

It was the method adopted and enjoined by the great Author of our religion, Matt. iv. 17. and x. 7 ; Mark xvi. 15 ; and that by which his Apostles succeeded in making known the gospel to the very ends of the earth, Mark xvi. 20 ; Acts v. 42 ; Rom. x. 14—18.

When engaged in, properly, as to its subject and manner, it is ever successful in accomplishing the great end for which it was originally adopted, 1 Cor. i. 21. A striking instance of its early success is recorded in the chapter before us ; and we are led by our text to enquire into—*the nature of that preaching which was so successful ; and into the effects which followed such preaching.*

I. THE NATURE OF THE PREACHING may be understood from the context.

The subject was CHRIST. The preacher's aim evidently was, to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah.

To do this *he speaks of him* (verse 22) as one that had been “approved of God among them by signs and miracles.” (See John iii. 2. and xiv. 10, 11; and Acts x. 38.) *He then declares* (verse 23) that this was the person delivered to death “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God;” (See Luke xxiv. 26, 27.) and thus introduces Christ as the Saviour,—the Sacrifice for sin Isa. liii. 10. *He next dwells on* his resurrection, and consequent exaltation; (verses 24—36.) and asserts that he is both *Lord* and *Christ*. These things *he confirms—by Scripture*, verses 25—28; and by sound *argument*, verses 29—36.

The *subject* was of the highest importance; it was perfectly suitable to the audience;—

And the manner of treating it was excellent. The *discussion* was plain—concise—clear. The *mode of address* was evidently courageous and bold. It was such, as being equally removed from impertinence and self-confidence on the one hand, and from the fear of man on the other; such as becomes those whom God employs to speak in his name. See Prov. xxix. 25; Jer. i. 17.

The *preacher* who *thus* conducted himself, demands our consideration. It was PETER, a late fisherman of Galilee, (Matt. iv. 18—20.) one of the lower class of society. PETER, a poor man, who said, “Silver and gold have I none,” chap. iii. 6. PETER, whose mind had never been stored nor expanded by the knowledge of the schools; but *Peter*, who had learned of the Lord Jesus, the Teacher who came from God: (John iii. 2.) He was well acquainted with the holy scriptures;—he knew the truth experimentally;—his soul was filled with the Holy Ghost;—he had good natural sense;—he was *divinely* called to preach the Gospel;—and *thus* qualified, he preached; power from above attended the word.

II. AND THE EFFECTS WHICH FOLLOWED well deserve our attention.

“*They were pricked in their heart.*” Hearers treat the word preached with indifference; or, feeling its force, they resist it; or, happily, like those whose case is before us, they yield to its convincing influence. These were pricked in their heart; see Heb. iv. 12. The address was made to their understanding,—their judgment,—their conscience; and being accompanied by

the power of divine grace, they were rationally, scripturally, and feelingly convinced of the error of their ways;

“And said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, What shall we do?” We may consider this as

The language of religious concern. They now perceived the vileness of their hearts, and the wickedness of their conduct; and the great crime of slighting, rejecting, and crucifying the Lord Jesus, particularly affected them. They saw the danger of their situation, and were alarmed about the consequences, see chap. ix. 6. Hence we cannot but view it, too, as

The language of religious distress. In all cases where sinners are brought to a state of proper concern about their souls, that concern is accompanied by distress, on account of their having offended God, neglected the blessed Saviour, grieved the Holy Spirit, and ruined themselves; see Jer xxxi. 18, 19; Zech. xii. 10. Such are anxious to know how they may “flee from the wrath to come;” how they may obtain salvation from sin here, and from its consequences hereafter: see Acts xvi. 30. We may therefore consider this, as

The language of humble inquiry. Such an inquiry, from such a people, is truly striking. Think on their former prejudices—the contempt in which they had held Jesus and his followers; the probability that there were among those, who thus exclaimed, some of the higher classes,—priests, at least, (chap. vi. 7.) and it must be acknowledged, that on this occasion, the power of divine grace to convince and to humble was singularly astonishing. And we learn from the subsequent verses, that this grace was no less powerful and conspicuous, in raising three thousands of broken-hearted penitents from a state of godly sorrow to that of holy joy.

Such was the preaching, and such were the effects.

Our minds are further led to the following improvement.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED *is, and ever should be, the grand subject of the Christian Ministry.* The Lord Jesus commanded his Apostles to preach in *his* name, see chap. xxiv. 24. They *began* thus, as we have now seen. Thus they *continued*; see chapters iii. 12, and iv. 5—12, and v. 30, and viii. 5, 35, and ix. 20, and x. 34—43, and xi. 20, &c.—to chap. xxviii. *They preached thus* to Jews and Gentiles, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

There is salvation in no other — there is no other name whereby

we can be saved, chap. iv. 12. JESUS,—his Deity,—his Incarnation,—his spotless Life,—his sacrificial Death,—his Resurrection, and Intercession; JESUS, who is the author and finisher of faith,—should be, with ministers, “the first and the last,”—“all, and in all.” *Most* of our discourses should be of *him* and *his salvation*; and *none* of them should be without a voice to say, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

We are also taught to adapt our discourse to our audience;—and boldly to declare the whole counsel of God; fearing the face of no man: see Jer. i. 7, 8; Ezek. ii. 6, 7.

In religion, it is of the utmost importance that the heart be affected: (“they were pricked in their heart;”) see Gen. vi. 5; 1 Jer. xvii. 9; Joel ii. 13; Mark vii. 21; Prov. iv. 23; Ps. li. 10, 17. Sin hath its seat in the heart;—there the change should begin: to be effectual, it must begin there. A mere change of sentiments,—of opinions,—of profession, will avail nothing; see chap. viii. 9, 13, 18, 23.

Persons may be so affected on account of their sin and danger, that they cannot in some cases, avoid strongly expressing what they feel. While, therefore, we cautiously guard against and check every thing in religious profession which is unscriptural, and that would lead to disorder and confusion; we should be fully aware that there may *still* be cases in which persons religiously affected cannot help saying, “Men and brethren, What shall we do?”

The essential importance of divine influence to render the word preached successful, is another idea suggested by the circumstances connected with the text. Could any argument, any eloquence of Peter’s, unaccompanied by the power of divine grace, have prevailed to awaken the consciences,—to bear down the prejudices,—and to subdue the pride of those who heard him? And can preachers in our day succeed without such influence? see John xv. 5; 1 Cor. iii. 6. Though the miracle-working power of the Holy Ghost is no longer necessary to give sanction to the supernatural doctrine of salvation by faith in a *crucified Saviour*, because *such* sanction has long since been sufficient; yet the power of the Holy Ghost to assist God’s ministers in their great work, and to convert and save sinners, *is ever alike necessary*, and is promised even to the end of the world. Matt. xxviii. 20; John xiv. 16; Luke xi. 13.

In the discharge of their sacred duty, let the preachers of the Gospel always seek—always expect divine aid; and ever look for some success. And though that success may not always be such as they desired, yet doing God's work in a right disposition, they may safely console themselves with these words:—"Surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." Isa. xlix. 4.

GAMMA

XXVIII. PAUL'S DISCOURSE BEFORE FELIX.

ACTS xxiv. 25.

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee."

THE character of St. Paul is highly distinguished in the sacred writings. Previous to his conversion, he was a strict Pharisee, and a violent persecutor of the primitive Christians. He was so exceedingly enraged against them, that he obtained authority and commission from the high priest, and made it his particular business, to pursue and persecute them unto death. But while he was thus engaged in the vilest course of wickedness, Jesus Christ "apprehended" and subdued him to his righteous sceptre. He then became an eminent Christian, and a zealous, successful preacher of the everlasting gospel. What things had been gain to him, he now counted loss for Christ; and the persecuting "Saul of Tarsus" was transformed into the indefatigable, but persecuted "Apostle of the Gentiles." In this and the preceding chapters, we have an account of a persecution raised against him, by the united efforts of the Jews and Romans. He was apprehended as a disturber of the public peace, and sent to Cesarea to be judged before Felix the governor. While he was there, Felix having some knowledge of the Christians, "sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ." *And as he reasoned, &c.* These words regard,—

I. THE MANNER OF THE APOSTLE'S PREACHING. "He reasoned of righteousness," &c. These are the principal subjects on which he dwelt and reasoned before Felix and Drusilla; from which we learn,—First, *His doctrine was important*. He reasoned of "the faith in Christ," or the Christian system in general, in all its superior properties, operations, and advantages.—*Righteousness* regards 'the principles and requisitions of justice and right, between God and man; and between man and his fellows, in all relations and connections of life.'—*Temperance* implies self-government, or due moderation in reference to all our appetites, passions, desires, pursuits, and enjoyments.—*And judgment to come*. Man is a rational, moral agent, and therefore a responsible being. This life is a state of probation, and hereafter we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and receive according to our doings. These are solemn truths, and should deeply impress our minds and influence our conduct.—Secondly, *His discourse was appropriate*. It was well adapted to the case of the person to whom it was addressed. Felix was an unjust and oppressive governor, and lived under the power of avarice, incontinence, intemperance, and injustice. The Apostle, therefore, knowing his character, did not flatter him, though he was his prisoner; but faithfully exposed his sins, and shewed him the necessity of faith in Christ, to obtain pardon and salvation.—Thirdly *His manner was judicious*: "He reasoned" on these subjects. The truths of religion are founded both on reason and revelation. No doubt Felix was accustomed to habits of reasoning, and would not receive any doctrine of the gospel, that appeared incompatible with the dictates and conclusions of rational principles. The Apostle, therefore, not only stated the topics he delivered as general and established maxims; but he also demonstrated their incontestible truth by sound reasoning and philosophical arguments. "He reasoned," &c. The gospel is not a "cunningly devised fable;" but a system of divine, rational, and eternal truth; and therefore should be received only on its natural and revealed evidence.

II. THE EFFECTS OF HIS PREACHING. "And as he reasoned—Felix trembled." The gospel is invariably the same in its nature, though its personal effects are diversified, according as it is believed and realized by its hearers.—First, *The effects of the gospel are sometimes slight and transient*. It is probable

this was the case with Drusilla, who heard the Apostle as well as Felix. And this is generally the case with all careless hearers, who are justly represented by them that “received the word by the way side, and into stony places.” It is truly lamentable to witness how many, who hear the gospel, remain utter strangers to its *abiding* and *saving* influence! James i. 23, 24.—Secondly, *The effects of the gospel are sometimes deep and powerful.* Thus it was with Felix, who *trembled* as Paul was preaching. He felt the force of truth—was conscious of his guilt—apprehended his danger—and was deeply affected with the view of his unhappy condition. The gospel is calculated to produce the most powerful effects, in convincing men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, Acts ii. 37; Heb. iv. 12.—Thirdly, *The effects of the gospel are sometimes influential, and saving.* The manifest design of the gospel, is to teach and lead men in the way of salvation, Acts xxvi. 18. And when it is received “in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance,” it enlightens the ignorant—liberates the captive—reforms the disobedient—and brings salvation to the believer, Romans i. 16; 1 Thess. ii. 13.—Fourthly, *The effects of the gospel are sometimes repelled and frustrated.* It is evident this was the case with Felix. He very *powerfully* and *visibly* felt the convincing truth of the Apostle’s discourse; but he resisted and banished its influence, by dismissing him from his presence. And all who hear the gospel, but do not savingly believe it, repel its sacred impressions—resist the operations of the Holy Spirit—and neglect their own salvation.

III. THE CONDUCT OF HIS HEARER. “Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way,” &c. This is the language of procrastination, which is to put off and disregard our present religious concerns, on the presumption of a future more “convenient season.” Observe—First, *Procrastination is a common vice.* The Lord wills the happiness of his creatures, and therefore makes use of various means to bring them to a knowledge of the truth. But men in general seem unconcerned about their immortal interests, and defer them to a future period, saying, “It is too soon—there is time enough yet—Go thy way for this time,” &c. —Secondly, *Procrastination is highly iniquitous.* We are commanded to regard religion as our present business, “for now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation”. Procrastina-

tion, therefore, leads us to violate the word and will of God. It is ingratitude, disobedience, negligence, and presumption, Prov. xxvii. 1.—Thirdly, *Procrastination is greatly injurious*. It tends to increase and confirm the principles and habits of ungodliness; and produces moral insensibility and hardness of heart. It profanes our talents—destroys our time—brings guilt and condemnation. It is extreme folly—it operates against our present welfare—and endangers our final happiness, Heb. iv. 7.—Fourthly, *Procrastination is often destructive*. It does not appear that Felix ever after consulted Paul on the subject of religion. To procrastinate is always dangerous, because life is uncertain. It leads men in the paths of wickedness, and very often terminates in everlasting destruction, Prov. i. 24-31. xxix. 1—CONCLUSION. Ministers ought to regard the Apostle's conduct by way of example and encouragement; and the case of Felix should be considered as the voice of warning and admonition.

ETA.

XXIX. THE ENMITY OF THE CARNAL MIND.

ROM. viii. 7.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God.”

IN the first four chapters of this Epistle, our Apostle *establishes the important doctrine of justification by faith*. This he does—by shewing that all mankind have sinned, and need salvation, chapter iii. 23. That being transgressors, we cannot be saved by the merit of works, iii. 28. And that all God's approved servants have been saved by faith: for Abraham was thus saved, as a specimen of the uncircumcised, iv. 1, 3, 10, 11. And David, as a specimen of those saved in circumcision, iv. 5-7. In the succeeding chapters, our Apostle *guards this doctrine* against all licentious abuse, to which it might be liable through human depravity. Here he shows, that gospel liberty is freedom from sin, chapter vi. 14, 17, 18, 22. That believers are enabled to

walk in this liberty, viii. 2-4. That their continued salvation depends on their thus walking, viii. 1, 13. And that a contrary deportment would imply rebellion against God. For "the carnal mind," &c. Enmity is a confirmed dislike to an object, accompanied with a disposition to oppose it, and, if possible, to injure it. In improving our text, let us consider the object, the subject, and the evidences of this enmity, here spoken of.

I. THE OBJECT OF THIS ENMITY. This is God, who may be justly considered as the kindest, the loveliest, and the greatest of beings.

1. *God is the kindest of beings.* This appears

From his *creating goodness*. In making us creatures capable of enjoying him; of enjoying the assurance of his favour; of bearing his holy image; of sharing in his heavenly glory; and in creating us for this benevolent purpose, Rev. iv. 11; Psalm xxxv. 27, 28.

From his *sustaining care*: by which he consults our best interests; preserves us from all evil; and constantly provides for us, Ps. viii. 4; 1 Pet. v. 7.

From his *redeeming mercy*: which devised the scheme of our redemption, Ps. cxxxvi. 23; Luke i. 78, 79; and confers its benefits, Mic. vii. 18, 19.

And from his patient *long-suffering*: which is designed to promote our repentance; by exciting us to it, Rom. ii. 4; and encouraging it, 2 Pet. iii. 9.

2. *God is the loveliest of beings.* This he evidently is—

For his kindness is most *extensive*, and impartial. It embraces all his creatures without exception, Ps. cxlv. 9. It is most *disinterested*, aiming not at his own profit, but ours, Psalm cxvii. 1, 2, and xxxvi. 7. It is most *prompt* in its exercises. He waits to be gracious, Isa. xxx. 18. It is most *generous* in its displays, not accompanied with upbraidings, James i. 5. And most *durable* in its continuance, it will never end, Psalm ciii. 17, 18.

3. *God is the greatest of beings.* He is infinite in *wisdom*, to discern and frustrate all the devices of his enemies, Proverbs xxi. 30; infinite in *power*, to execute all his purposes, James iv. 12; and infinite in *happiness*; enjoying felicity, which cannot be augmented; and security, which cannot be violated. Consequently, he is incapable of error through ignorance; of selfish-

ness through want; or of cruelty through fear. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable," Psalm cxlv. 3. But though he is the kindest, and loveliest as well as the greatest of beings, yet all do not love him. "For the carnal mind is enmity," &c. Let us therefore consider,

II. THE SUBJECT OF THIS ENMITY. The carnal mind.

1. *The mind*, the immortal part of man: the most noble part of the most dignified creature on earth. This the human mind must be—because it is *rational*; capable of admitting true conceptions of things; capable of retaining those conceptions, of comparing them, and of deducing just conclusions from them, Job xxxv. 10, 11. And because it is *free* in all its acts. It is capable of choosing what reason requires, and of rejecting what it forbids. This is incontestible from God's gracious influence Phil. ii. 13; his proposals to mankind, Deut. xxx. 19, 20; and from the complaints brought against the impenitent, John v. 40; Matthew xxiii. 37.

2. *The carnal mind*: the natural mind of man; that mind which we bring with us into the world. The uninspired, unrenewed mind, which is not enlightened, purified, and governed, by God's Holy Spirit, Jude 19. The human mind, while it remains in this state, is called carnal,—because of its *descent*. Our minds are certainly transmitted with our bodies, by what is called natural traduction. This appears from Scripture: for "on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made;" that is, the work of creation, Gen. ii. 2. But this he could not have done, if he continues to create human souls. It is also said, "In the day that God created man, in the image of God made he him," Gen. v. 1, but of Seth it is said, "And Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image," Gen. v. 3. Hence our Lord justly concludes, "That which is born of flesh, is flesh," John iii. 6. When the tree is corrupt, the fruit must be corrupt also, Matt. vii. 17. The soul's descent by natural traduction is also evident from facts; for children resemble their parents in mental dispositions, no less than in features. The mind is also called carnal or fleshly, because of its *affections* and *exercises*. With respect to its affections, it supremely desires and delights in the things of this world. Those things which gratify the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye, and the pride of life, 1 John ii. 15, 16; Phil iii. 18, 19. With respect to its exercises,

all its purposes, its aims and its contrivances are employed to obey its own will, in opposition to the will of God, Gen. vi. 5. It must therefore follow, that those who act under the influence of the carnal mind, are enemies to God by wicked works. Which leads us to observe,

III. THE EVIDENCES OF THIS ENMITY. Enmity of mind must in itself be unseen, but may be perceived by its overt acts. For instance, when a subject is at enmity against his sovereign, he manifests it by aversion from all intercourse with him, wilful disobedience to his commands, hostile opposition to him, and hatred to his friends and servants. Thus also enmity against God is manifested,

1. *By aversion from communion with him.* To this God graciously calls us, Isa. lv. 6; 2 Chron. vii. 14. But this man naturally rejects, Job xxi. 14, 15; Isa. lxiv. 7.

2. *By wilful disobedience to God's known commands.* These he sets before us in his word, and by his servants; but man rebels against them, Dan. ix. 9, 10.

3. *By hostile opposition to him.* *Opposition to an amicable agreement with him*, Jer. vi. 16; ii. 25; to the gracious strivings of his spirit, Acts vii. 51; and to the interests of his kingdom; by endeavouring to prevent its extension, Matt. xxiii. 13; and to seduce its subjects, Prov. i. 10; 1 Kings xiv. 16.

4. *And by hatred to his friends and followers.* This they manifest by reviling, slandering, and tormenting them, Matt. v. 11; John xv. 19; Heb. xi. 37.

This enmity of the carnal mind against God teaches us,

1. *That all mankind are naturally in a degenerate state.* Man, when first created, was made *upright*; he was then just and grateful towards his Maker, Eccl. vii. 29. He was *very good*, Gen. i. 31. And he was *crowned with glory* in himself, and with *honour* by the inferior creatures, Ps. viii. 5, 6. But man, as an enemy to God, is *unjust*, for he robs God by self-desecration, Romans vi. 13. He is *ungrateful*, for he returns the greatest evil he is capable of repaying for the greatest good he is capable of enjoying, Isa. i. 2. He is *injurious* to his dearest connexions, Prov. iii. 33; Deut. xxviii. 18. He is *debased* by captivity to his greatest enemy, 2 Tim. ii. 26; and by condemnation to everlasting infamy, 1 Sam. ii. 30; Dan. xii. 2. To this degeneracy all mankind are naturally subject, however amiable in temper, or polished in manners, Psalm xiv. 2, 3. This teaches us.

2. *That an entire change of mind is necessary to our eternal salvation.* Are your minds at enmity against God? Are you averse? &c. Then consider—your enmity exposes you to certain destruction, 2 Thess. i. 7—9; Proverbs xxix. 1. This destruction is certain; from God's knowledge of your sins, Job xxxiv. 21, 22; from his justice, Rom. ii. 6, 8, 9; and from his truth, Ps. lxxviii. 21; Deut. xxxii. 40, 41. A change of mind is therefore indispensably requisite; every other change is insufficient; whether it be of sentiment, name, or outward conduct, Gal. vi. 15; John iii. 7.

3. *To obtain this change should engage our most serious concern.* Seek it in God's way; by repentance, Acts iii. 19; by prayer, Ps. li. 10; for Christ's sake, Eph. iv. 32. Seek it in God's time; now, without excuse or delay, Job xxii. 21; Ps. xcv. 7, 8. Seek it with confident expectation; from the success of others, Col. i. 21; from God's amicable disposition, 2 Cor. v. 19; his entreaty, 2 Cor. v. 20; and his promises, Isa. lv. 6, 7.

ALPHA.

XXX. NONCONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

ROMANS xii. 2.

“And be not conformed to this world.”

THE Christians at Rome, to whom St. Paul dedicated this Epistle, had made considerable improvement in religion, and obtained great celebrity in their profession; they were the *beloved of God*, and their faith was *spoken of throughout the whole world*. To seek renown for personal beauty, or some exterior embellishment, is the genuine offspring of worldly vanity; but to be emulous to approve ourselves unto God, and obtain the *honour of all his saints*, is a principle which religion only inspires, and Christians only enjoy. St. Paul had never seen the Romans in the flesh, but as he had the care of all the churches, he men-

tioned them always in his prayers—had often purposed to visit them; and to evince how deeply he was interested in their welfare, he sent them this Epistle, which contains not only a statement of the sublime doctrine of Christianity, but a clear view of experimental and practical godliness, together with the most affectionate exhortations to excite them to duty. St. Paul had *no dominion over their faith*, and therefore he begins his chapter thus, “I beseech you,” &c. ver. 1. The text is a part of this request, and therefore we will endeavour to shew,

I. THE NATURE OF THAT CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD WHICH THE TEXT PROHIBITS. By the phrase *this world*, we understand the ungodly part of mankind, all unregenerate persons, whether openly profane, or pharisaically moral. They are thus denominated, either to shew that worldly objects engross all their attention, or else to distinguish them from those who are not of this world, John xvii. 14. The prohibition against conformity to *this world*, is not to be understood absolutely, or practised rigorously; it is not *ceremonial*, consisting in “meats or drinks,” or external forms and habits; nor is it *civil*, leading us to abandon all intercourse with the world; to retire from the haunts of men, and shut ourselves up in cloisters or nunneries. No, Christians are to be the lights of the world; and they must go where their light will shine to the best advantage; they are the salt of the earth, and the salt must be diffused to preserve the mass from putrefaction. But the conformity here prohibited is *moral*, and may be reduced to the following points.

1. Be not conformed to the spirit and temper of the world; live not under the influence of carnal dispositions or ungodly tempers: what these are, the Scriptures clearly state, Mark vii. 21—23; Gal. v. 19—21. Such are the genuine fruits produced by that “root that beareth gall and wormwood,” and such the corrupt streams that flow from the impure fountain of the human heart.

2. Be not conformed to this world in the maxims by which you are governed, or the rules by which you are directed. The miser has his maxims of worldly prudence and carnal policy; the hero has his maxims of worldly honour; the pleasure-taker has his maxims of carnal gratification. Remember your actions are not to be directed by such rules, nor your characters formed by such models; if you study worldly maxims, it should be with

a design to perceive their inconsistency with those rules you profess to follow.

3. Be not conformed to this world in your company. As men of business, you may and must resort to marts of trade and places of public merchandise; and as mechanics or husbandmen, you may be obliged to labour for the bread that perisheth, in company with the men of this world. But form no unnecessary alliance with them, make no choice of them for your companions, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; Eph. v. 11; James iv. 4; and,

4. Most of all, be not conformed to this world in your practices; all such as are inconsistent with your allegiance to God, your duty to your neighbour, and love to yourselves.

II. ASSIGN SOME REASONS FOR ITS PROHIBITION.

1. *Duty prohibits it.* The text is the voice of God, it is the expression of his will. The same sovereign power that said "Thou shalt do no murder," said "Be not conformed to this world." You owe your all to God; his you are, and his will you are bound to obey; but by conformity to this world, you run counter to his will, and as much as lieth in you thwart his designs.

2. *Profession prohibits it.* The vows of God are upon you; your baptismal engagements bind you to renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, &c. By the profession of Christianity, you tacitly acknowledge that you are aiming to be like Christ; and how far he was from conforming to this world the writings of the four Evangelists sufficiently attest, John viii. 23; xviii. 36. By profession you engage to imitate the saints; and the stripes and tortures they endured from the world are indisputable evidences that conformity *to this world* was not their crime.

3. *Self-love prohibits it.* This is not such a world as we may safely imitate; it is a theatre of folly, a stage of vice, one great aceldama of blood and cruelty. The world lieth in wickedness; it is not merely sunk in the gulphs of wickedness, but lies there contentedly buried in sin, like the earth in the universal deluge; and by conforming to this world you take the most direct steps to plunge yourself into that condemnation which will be the portion of the ungodly.

4. *The love of your neighbour prohibits it.* By conforming to this world, you countenance crime, and strengthen the cause

of wickedness; you give it settlement, succession, and perpetuity; you embolden others to sin, and as sin and misery go together, you swell the aggregate of human woe, and people the regions of the damned.

5. *The interests of religion prohibit it.* By conforming to this world, you stab you own peace, and wound your own conscience; you grieve the Spirit of God; you cause the friends of Zion to mourn; you turn the lame out of the way, and make the enemies of Christianity triumph.

III. HOW MAY THIS CONFORMITY BE PREVENTED?

1. *By the regeneration of our natures;* read the close of the verse. This is a divine work, but prayer will secure the agency of that Being who effects it, John iii, 6; Matthew vi. 11.

2. *By the exercise of devout meditation* and daily prayer.

3. *By guarding against temptation,* keeping out of its way, being "all eye, all ear, all watchfulness."

4. *Above all by a constant dependence on God.*

Conclusion.—1, The spirit of Christianity is a totally distinct thing from the spirit of the world. 2. Our living in the world is no argument why we should be like the world; see Lot, Noah, Daniel, &c. 3. The charge of singularity should never frighten us from our duty. Let us not be fools for the sake of avoiding being called such, nor be damned for the sake of company.

BETA.

XXXI. DIVINE WISDOM DISPLAYED IN THE GOSPEL.

1 COR. i. 21.

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

THAT man is a lapsed and degenerate creature, is evident from the united testimonies of reason, revelation, and experience. The omnipotent Creator is a being of essential and infinite perfection; and therefore whatever he has made, must have been originally

good and pleasing in his sight. Man was created "upright," in the image of God, which is "righteousness and true holiness;" and as a moral being and a free agent, he was placed in a state of probation; subject to a perfectly moral law, which he wilfully violated, and became obnoxious to its curse and punishment. Thus, through the federal head of mankind, we have lost all primitive rectitude, and sunk into a state of guilt, depravity, and condemnation. All men acknowledge the fact; but, without divine revelation, are unable to account for its existence. This subject has occupied the attention of wise and good men in every age, both Jews and Gentiles. The ancient heathen philosophers deplored human ignorance and corruption, and professed to discover and teach the way of wisdom and happiness; but all their efforts were vain and unsuccessful—*For the world by wisdom knew not God.* It therefore pleased the Lord to devise a scheme of redemption, through the incarnation and death of his Son; and the gospel clearly reveals the method of salvation, and the means which lead to its possession. "For after that in the wisdom of God," &c. The text suggests various important truths, which we will consider in the following order:—

I. THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS A SUPERNATURAL SCIENCE. "The world by wisdom knew not God." By the world, the Apostle meant the heathen world: and particularly their learned philosophers and moralists. His charge of their ignorance is confirmed, not only by his repeated testimonies, but also by their own records, and the general history of mankind. The heathen sages, with all their boasted wisdom, had no true knowledge of the eternal Jehovah, or the nature of his worship. They acknowledged his *existence*, and professed to reverence his name; but they ascribed to him various imperfections, and substituted subordinate deities as objects of divine worship. Their religion both sanctioned and promoted malice, revenge, idolatry, impure affections, and every species of practical ungodliness. These things evidently prove that the heathen world,—not only the vulgar and illiterate, but also the best and most learned philosophers,—were ignorant of the true character and perfections of the Deity—the purity of his worship—the nature of religion—the way to happiness—and the invisible realities of a future state. Genuine religion is a subject of *pure revelation*, and cannot be discovered by *human reason*, in its most perfect state. It is a

spiritual science, and can only be comprehended *by faith*, and realized through the operations of the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. ii. 14.

II. THE GOSPEL IS A FULL DEVELOPEMENT OF THE METHOD OF SALVATION. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Christ crucified, is the grand subject of the gospel ministration. This doctrine was revealed to the patriarchs and prophets, but is more perfectly unfolded in the gospel of Christ. The gospel is a faithful testimony and revelation of what the Lord hath done to redeem and save sinners. He remembered us in our low estate, and in Jesus Christ made sufficient provision for the salvation of mankind. The gospel, therefore, is "good tidings of great joy to all people." It is to be preached and made known, that men may believe and be saved. The Apostles preached it to the Jews, who regarded it as "a stumbling-block," and to the Gentiles, who treated it as "foolishness," because they published salvation through faith in the crucified Saviour; but to them that believed, "Christ the wisdom of God, and the power of God." Thus, the gospel is not only a *revelation* of the scheme of salvation, but also an *instrument* of its accomplishment in the believer, Romans i. 16.

III. THE GOSPEL IS A GLORIOUS DISPLAY OF INFINITE WISDOM. "In the *wisdom* of God," &c. The Divine Being always acts according to infinite wisdom and eternal truth. His wisdom is manifested in the works of creation and providence; but it is more gloriously displayed in the redemption and salvation of sinners. In the dispensation of grace, the Lord has proposed the *best possible ends*, and accomplishes them by the *best possible means*. The *supreme end* is the glory of God; and the *subordinate end* is the salvation of man. The means used are, the gift, incarnation, sufferings, atonement, resurrection, and intercession of Christ—the diffusion and operations of the Holy Ghost—the preaching, ordinances, and power of the gospel. In this scheme, all the divine perfections are harmonized and glorified—sin, Satan, death, and hell, are conquered—man is redeemed—salvation is rendered possible—and heaven is opened to them that believe. This exceeds in an infinite degree all the wisdom and learning of the ancient philosophers, and all the principles, systems, and maxims of the heathen sages. It is not

only a display of the wisdom of God, but is the *medium* of all Christian knowledge.

IV. THE GOSPEL IS A CLEAR MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE BENEVOLENCE AND LOVE. "It *pleased* God," &c. Whatever is pleasing to the Lord, must be conformable to the essential perfections of his nature. He does not act under the impulse of constraint and compulsion. His love is spontaneous and free. God is pure essential love; and therefore, the happiness of his creatures is the object of his pleasure. Redemption is called, "the pleasure of the Lord." It originates in his eternal philanthropy, and the emanations of his goodness. The Lord was pleased to send his Son to redeem us, Luke ii. 10—14; with his person and office, Matthew iii. 16, 17; with his redeeming and saving benefits, Col. i. 19. He is pleased with the conversion and salvation of sinners, Ezek. xxxiii. 11; Luke xv. 20—24; 1 Tim. ii. 4; and with the final happiness of his people, Luke xii. 32. Both the wisdom and goodness of God are eminently displayed in the covenant of redemption.

V. THE GOSPEL ENJOINS FAITH AS AN ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLE OF SALVATION. "It pleased God *to save them that believe.*" Though the gospel is a revelation of the divine method of saving sinners; yet it only becomes the *instrument* of personal salvation, as it is received and applied *by faith*, 1 Thess. ii. 13. Jesus Christ, as he is made known in the gospel, in his person, works, and offices, is the *grand object* of Christian faith. We must therefore *believe* the gospel before we can experience its saving influence. Genuine faith implies a cordial reception of the doctrines of the gospel, which obtains a personal participation of its blessings, and produces a practical performance of its precepts. These important truths should deeply impress our minds with the superior advantages of the Christian dispensation—the increased obligations our privileges involve—and the divine encouragements the gospel affords.

ETA.

XXXII. PURCHASED SERVICE.

1 COR. vi. 19, 20.

‘What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.’

WHEN the Apostle, writing to the Hebrews, chap. xii., contemplated the Christian life as a race, he said, “Wherefore—let us lay aside—the sin,” &c. *This sin may be such, as the sin of our constitution,—education,—habit,—or profession.* But it *must* be laid aside. Consistent with this is the doctrine of our text. Most places of wealth and commerce are much infested with the sin of fornication; but Corinth was proverbially so. It formed a part of their religion; and they prayed for an increase of it. It is therefore probable that this was an “easily besetting sin” to some of the Corinthian Christians; against which they had need of being warned. Accordingly, we find the Apostle reproving them sharply, chap. v. In this chapter he resumes the subject; and our text is his application. “What,” &c. Here he *asserts* a truth—adduces *proof* of his assertion;—and attempts to *improve* it. We consider,

I. THE TRUTH ASSERTED. “Ye are *not* your own.” This assertion evidently refers to two different conditions of life,—those of freeman, and servant; particularly *that* description of servant that was the absolute property of his master. He who was “his own,” the freeman, was, 1st, not *dependent* on a master for his support; 2nd, nor *amenable* to him for his conduct; consequently, 3rd, not *obliged* to *consult* the *pleasure*, or, 4th, to *obey* the *commands* of a master. The Apostle, therefore, would check that spirit of *independence* which has produced so much disaster from the *days of Adam* until *now*,—remind us of our approaching *account*;—and curb, and cure, both *self-will* and *disobedience*. “Ye are *not* your own.”

II. THE PROOF ADDUCED. “For ye are bought with a price.” The Apostle here waves all proof arising from *creation*, &c., and claims us for God’s *solely* on account of *redemption*; by which he, in fact, refers us to the *moving cause* of that redemption,—

“*God so loved,*” &c.; to the *nearness* of the *Redeemer*,—“his only-begotten, his dear Son:” to the *greatness* of the *redemption price*,—not silver and gold, the “*precious metals*,” in common acceptation, in the esteem of St. Peter, (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) “*corruptible things*,” with *these* servants were purchased, and captives redeemed; but *ye* “with the *precious blood of Christ*,” &c. As parties concerned, it is of consequence to consider, as what we are redeemed *with*, so also what we are redeemed *from*; shameful, painful, cursed slavery. *Shameful slavery*. In its *origin*, a being *disgracefully duped* by an enemy that had not power to *force*. In its *progress*, a *tame submission* to an *usurping* and *inveterate* foe;—a *prostitution* of talent, in catering for the *worst* half of our disordered nature;—a *criminal rebellion* against our *best friend* and *father*;—a *stupid* neglect of our *supreme good*. In its *end*, a shameful *conviction*, before assembled worlds;—and a vile *consignment* to the *infernal dungeon*. *Painful slavery*. Sin may indeed have its pleasures; but it is when the paroxysms of passion suspend serious thought. All pain is the effect of sin. Notice the fruits of intemperance, diseases, embarrassments, anticipations of death, &c. And, finally, the *cursed slavery* of hellish pains. We also observe what we are redeemed *for*,—not for *independence*. The moment man or angel attempts this, he falls under the domination of unholy passions. “An independent creature,” is a contradiction in terms. God cannot make such a being. Our choice is between the service of Satan, or of God. The *latter* affords many privileges; such as *pardon of past offences*:—*adoption*, Rom. viii. 15—18. *Citizenship of heaven*, Eph. ii. 19; Phil. iii. 20; which entitles to participation of *gospel benefits*; the indwelling of the “*Holy Ghost*,” &c., Eph. i. 14. *Of gospel honours*. Jesus rides on, conquering, and to conquer; and he is not ashamed to call us brethren, John xx. 17. And of its final *triumph*. See 1 Cor. xv. 25. Then may *we* join the triumphal song, Rev. i. 6. and vii. 10—12.

III. THE IMPROVEMENT ATTEMPTED. “Therefore, glorify God,” &c. To glorify God is to *confess* that he is most excellent, and *worthy* to be adored and worshipped by his creatures. *You* should do this in the language of *action*;—in your *body*; which is his, not only as the fabricator, Psalm cxxxix. 15, 16, —the supporter,—the purchaser,—but also as the *occupier* of

it;—"the temple of the Holy Ghost." A temple is a building, set apart from common uses, to the service of the Divinity. Your body is the temple, not of an imaginary deity—a "nothing;" but of the *Supreme Being*. Therefore, avoid every thing base, live as becomes your *dignity*. The temple, not of any of that rabble of gods, whose attributes were rage, revenge, and *lust*;—but of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, "flee fornication," and all intemperance; and live according to the *purity* and the *sanctity* of the heavenly inhabitant. Different parts of the temple, and its furniture, may be employed to *different*—though in every case *holy*—purposes. "Let your *eyes*," &c. (the inlets to the sacred edifice) be employed to admit more of heavenly light and information; your *feet* and *hands* to minister in holy things; on your *hearts*, let the pure fire of devotion glow; and let your *lips* celebrate the praises of the Most High;—in a word, let "your members be instruments of righteousness unto God." And let every *faculty* of the *soul* also be thus employed. Your *understandings*, to apprehend his perfections and his will; your *memories*, to treasure up his revelation; your *thoughts*, in meditating on him; your *will* and *affections*, in choosing him and his ways; and let your *tempers*, sweetened by grace, prompt to all holy obedience. He who thus feels and acts, glorifies, magnifies, *all* the perfections of God:—his *Wisdom*, by saying, in effect, "I believe that all these directions are *wisely* given." His *Goodness*: he walks in the way appointed, and thereby says, "If this painful thing were not *good*, God would not have commanded it: if this pleasing thing *were* good, he would not have prohibited it. His *Power*: God has threatened to punish, and promised to reward;—the good man declares, that what God has spoken, he is *able* to perform;—thus also he exalts the *truth*, and *unchangeableness*, and every *perfection* of Deity. On the contrary, the sinner glorifies the devil; not by asserting perfections which Satan has; but by attributing to him perfections which he has not. *This man* follows the sinful delusions of the prince of darkness, and father of lies, as though they were the dictates of *wisdom* and *truth*, &c., &c. But what will ye do in the *end* thereof? *Deceiver* and *dupe* must be damned *together*. We dismiss this subject with two considerations: the one of *cantion*; 1 Cor. iii. 15, 16;—the other of *encouragement* "glorify God, and he will glorify you," Ps. l. 23.

ZETA.

XXXIII. PAUL'S CONSOLATION.

2 Cor. xii. 9.

“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

IN the preceding verses of this chapter, the Apostle records an extraordinary revelation with which God had favoured him fourteen years before the date of this Epistle. He describes himself as caught up into the third heaven—which he calls Paradise, where he heard unspeakable words, &c. verse 2—4. It is evident, from the meaning and design of the context, that this was related concerning himself. His use of the third person in the description, was the result of that modesty and humility which are the inseparable companions of real worth; and which shone so conspicuously in the spirit and conduct of St. Paul. He, who for more than fourteen years had concealed such a distinguished privilege, was sure, when constrained to disclose it, to do it with the greatest possible caution and diffidence. Who would have supposed that such a glorious manifestation could have been liable to any abuse; or that such sacred discoveries should have produced any injurious influence? Earthly honours are, from their very nature, dangerous and ensnaring. But can divine favours and spiritual attainments do any harm? Yes! without great circumspection they certainly may;—so St. Paul found it. He was in danger of being exalted above measure. To prevent this, *there was given him a thorn in the flesh*, &c. The Apostle prayed earnestly and repeatedly for its removal. Our text acquaints us with the result of his importunity—the answer of God to his prayer. *And he said unto me*, &c. This circumstance in the Apostle's experience will lead us to observe,

I. HIS PECULIAR AFFLICTION.

II. HIS SEASONABLE CONSOLATION.

III. HIS GRATEFUL RESIGNATION.

I. *His peculiar affliction.* It was *a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan*, &c. Expositors have been much perplexed

to ascertain what St. Paul meant by the thorn in the flesh: various and contradictory opinions have been given—some of them are unmeaning, and some absurd. It would be a waste of time to attempt an examination of them. The phrase is most unquestionably metaphorical, and strongly expresses the painful influence of the Apostle's affliction—which, like a thorn rankling in the flesh, was sharp and distressing. May not the meaning of St Paul be gathered from the context? In the verse following our text—which must be considered as a continuation of his holy triumph, in consequence of the assurance he had received of the sufficiency of the Redeemer's grace to support him—he says, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities," &c. These appear to have constituted the thorn in the flesh, concerning which so much has been said. We may not be suffering precisely in the same way as the Apostle was; but every Christian can feelingly speak of a *thorn in the flesh*: each has his own peculiar trial. Our afflictions may be considered in two respects—*In their appointment*—and *in their design*.

1. *In their appointment*. In St. Paul's affliction we may easily discern the superintending power and influence of the Almighty—the *thorn in the flesh* was a messenger of Satan to buffet him; the enemy of souls designed to distress, and if possible to destroy him; but his intention was over-ruled, and his purpose was frustrated. The Lord holds all creatures in his hand, and can control, and direct their agency, as he pleases—even Satan can do no more than he is permitted—his operations shall be rendered subservient to the accomplishments of God's will. Let us never stop at second causes, but rise in our reflections to that gracious Being who orders all things for our good.

2. *In their design*; *Lest I should be exalted above measure*, &c. Here was his danger. He saw it—and frankly acknowledged it. How few apprehend danger from divine manifestations—and how many are robbed of their blessings, and shorn of their glory, by spiritual pride! To prevent this, there was given to Paul a *thorn in the flesh*, &c., not because he *was* exalted above measure, but *lest he should be*.—Affliction is as frequently designed to *prevent* the children of God from falling into the snare of the tempter—as to *recover* them after they have fallen. A regard to this, as the chief and most merciful design of our sufferings, is of great importance to our safety and preservation.

How much sin and how much sorrow would be avoided, by yielding to the first monitions of a wise and gracious Providence! Prevention is better than cure.

II. *His seasonable consolation*—He said, “My grace is,” &c. Here several things are worthy of remark.

1. *This consolation was imparted in answer to prayer.* For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, &c.—Paul was a man of prayer, he lived in the constant exercise of it. In affliction he experiences the advantages of an intercourse and alliance with God. The throne of grace presented him with a sanctuary into which no enemy could enter. It is well when sorrow leads the soul to prayer. Devotion hallows our tears, and sanctifies our grief. He was not only *fervent*, but *frequent* in imploring the removal of his affliction—he besought the Lord *thrice*. Jesus Christ did the same *in his agony—he prayed three times*, &c. Perhaps the expression should not be considered numerically: but as signifying the frequency of prayer. How necessary is this in order to success. The prayer of faith, though heard, may not be answered immediately: God wisely detains us at his footstool—that we may be *blessed* while there—and value the answer more when imparted. Let us be patient and persevering.

2. *It was communicated in wisdom*—so as not to deprive the apostle of the benefit of the affliction. This was a display both of the wisdom and goodness of God. The answer did not appear to correspond with the petition—and yet it was fully regarded. God knows what is best for us. A disappointment, though distressing, may be necessary. *Not my will, but thine be done*—should qualify all our prayers.

3. *It was fully adequate to the occasion.* *My grace is sufficient*, &c. This was enough—a declaration fuller and more satisfactory could not have been given. *Sufficient* for all thy wants—for *doing* and *suffering*—for all *purposes* and all *situations*. The fire may *burn*, but cannot *consume*. The affliction *must* be continued, but it *shall not harm*. This is displayed in history, and confirmed by experience.

III. *His gracious resignation.* *Most gladly therefore*, &c. Here we observe the *manner*, and the *motive*, of his resignation.

1. *The manner*;—*most gladly*. In this consisted its worth and excellence. Resignation cannot be forced, it must be the

result of the will. How wide is the difference between I *must*, and I *will* submit. Philosophy may produce the former, divine grace alone can inspire the latter. It was not only *voluntary*, but *triumphant*. “Most gladly will I *glory*,” &c.

2. The *motive*;—that the power of Christ may rest upon me. This was the *defence* of all his glory. The power of Christ would rest upon him, as the cloud upon the Hebrew camp. His sufferings would manifest the power and sufficiency of Christ. {Such language, though spoken on earth, could only be learned in heaven. *May we realize its import and influence.*

EPSILON.

XXXIV. THE BELIEVER CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST, AND CHRIST LIVING IN THE BELIEVER.

GAL. ii. 20.

“I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

ST. PAUL’S great object in this epistle was to establish the grand doctrine of justification by faith. For this purpose he employs various conclusive arguments, and among others the same which he used, Rom. vii. 4, viz. that the law has no claim over a man when he is dead. Now all believers are dead to the law by, or in, the body of Christ. The law has taken its course, and inflicted its penalty on them in the person of their substitute, that they, being delivered from all its claims as a covenant of works, might devote themselves unto God. “For,” says the Apostle, “I through the law am dead unto the law, that I might live unto God.” But how? “I am crucified with Christ.” His crucifixion has fully convinced me that I cannot be saved by the law; and the law having condemned me, has also slain me in the person of my Saviour, who hath redeemed me from the curse

of the law, being made a curse for me. Hence, although dead in the eye of the law, and as truly dead to all hopes of justification and life from it as Christ was really dead upon the cross, “nevertheless I live.” I still exist and am blessed, “yet not I,” as a fallen child of Adam, or as one who has produced a new spiritual life in himself—no; “but Christ liveth in me,” his Spirit dwells within, and is become the very soul of my soul, so that now I live unto God. But this life, “I live by the faith of the Son of God,” &c. By an entire dependence upon the efficacy of his death, I apprehend his love, and obtain this inestimable blessing.

Such is the Apostle’s argument. In this description of a Christian’s state and experience, he declares,

I. THAT THE BELIEVER IS CONFORMED TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST. “I am crucified with Christ.” Let us examine,

1. *The nature of this crucifixion.* It is figurative, not literal; yet real, and not chimerical. To be crucified to an object, is a form of speech which denotes an entire rupture with it—a dying for it, and holding no further intercourse with it. For, as in a literal death, whether by crucifixion, or otherwise, a man is released from all terrestrial bonds, and enters upon a completely new state of existence, so in this spiritual crucifixion the believer relinquishes all connexion with the idols to which his heart was previously wedded, renounces all unhallowed intercourse with forbidden objects, and closing his eyes upon all the past, he enters into another state, in which he has no communication with the former.

To be crucified *with Christ*, may not only signify suffering and dying unto sin, conformably to his example, but also to effect this by the efficacy of his cross, Gal. vi. 14.

2. *The objects to which the Christian is crucified, and the principles which thereby expire.*

The first object is the *law*, considered as a means of justification. Here expires his self-righteousness, Romans vii. 9, 10. The second object is the *world*. And here expire all those principles by which the world becomes ensnaring. He is crucified to its *applauses*—dead to its pageantry, pomp, and splendour—disdainful of merely human smiles, and unawed by mortal frowns. Here his ambition, vanity, false shame, and spiritual
 vardice, yield up the ghost. To its *treasures*. His treasures

are in heaven—hence his covetousness, illiberality, and the vices which spring from that “root of all evil, the love of money,” are mortified, and put to death. To its *gratification*. Neither “the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, nor the pride of life,” can captivate his soul—for “his flesh is crucified with its affections and lusts.” The third object is *self*. By being crucified to self, I mean the utter renunciation of his own will and wisdom, together with his entire subjection to the will and wisdom of God. Previous to this submission, *self* was sought in every thing, God in nothing. But now the Christian suppresses every rising of unhallowed desire, and resolves all his wishes, purposes, and plans, into the sovereign will of heaven. Here then are slain his impatience and discontent, together with his fondest hopes of creature happiness.

3. *The sufferings which accompany this crucifixion.* The term itself implies acute and protracted sufferings. To be crucified is to have the whole body suspended on nails driven through the hands and feet, while life is drained off drop by drop, wrung out by the most exquisite torture. To this horrible death the mortification of sin is compared. And although the Christian’s consolations vastly out weigh his pains, the comparison is strictly just.

The *means* necessary to effect this conformity to Christ, are usually *severe* conviction—galling mortifications, and disappointments—distressing views of folly, ignorance, and helplessness, &c.

The *actual surrender of the heart*, the complete renunciation of all the objects and principles which it held so dear, is generally accompanied by much bleeding, and many pangs.

The *continuance* of this struggle is a grievous circumstance. Crucifixion is not a momentary suffering. We must hang on the cross till the flesh and all its evils expire.

But, blessed be God, the Christian has enjoyments too—enjoyments which infinitely counterbalance all his pains. We shall perceive this by considering,

II. THAT THE BELIEVER PARTICIPATES THE LIFE OF CHRIST. “I live,” &c. He dies to one dispensation, but he lives under another. He dies to the law, but lives under the Gospel. He dies to the world and sin, but lives unto God. Let us investigate,

1. *The principles of this life.* “I live, yet not I.” This life is not *natural*, it does not originate in myself; nor *carnal*, for my “old man” is crucified—“but Christ liveth in me.” Behold the principle; Christ is the believer’s life, Col. iii. 4. His soul is become “the habitation of God, through the Spirit.”

Christ, as God, hath the heavens for his throne, &c. His glorified humanity is also in heaven. But by his Spirit he dwells in believers, and they are so united to him as to become one Spirit. The *manner* of this union is inexplicable—but the *fact* is certain. Christ dwelleth in them as their *light*. As the sun of righteousness, he shines into their souls; as *the Lord of their affections*, he is enthroned in their hearts, and all their passions bow to his sway; as the *spring of their joys*—as *the hope of glory*, Col. i. 27. Christ lives in the Christian—as a *deity* in his temple—as a *guest* with his host, Rev. iii. 30; as the *heart* is in the body.

2. *The evidences of this life.* Holy, amiable *tempers*—spiritual, heavenly *conversation*—pious benevolent *actions*.

3. *The grand instrument by which it is introduced and maintained in the soul—Faith.* “I live by faith,” &c. Christ dwells in the heart by faith, Eph. iii. 17. We can have no intercourse with him, no enjoyment of him, but by faith. By faith in him, we die to the law, overcome the world, and crucify the flesh. Faith particularly regards Christ as “loving us” &c.—as a crucified Redeemer. The cross is all. ‘Heaven’s sovereign blessings clustering from the cross,’ &c. In proportion as this faith is exercised, Christ is revealed, and his life in us becomes manifest. This subject,

1. Furnishes a *test* to try the reality of our religion, and the measure of our attainments.

2. Exposes the delusion of Pharisees, Hypocrites, and Antinomians.

3. Exhibits the dignity, felicity, and exalted hopes of the real believer,

DELTA.

XXXV. SINNERS BROUGHT NIGH BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

EPHES. ii. 13.

“But now in Jesus Christ, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

THE Ephesian Christians, previous to their conversion, were Gentiles, ver. 11; and thus were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, ver. 12. The prophets had foretold that Jesus should be given “for a light to the Gentiles,”—for God’s salvation to the ends of the earth, Isa. xlix. 6. Jesus came; the Gentiles were enlightened; the ends of the earth saw the salvation of God; and “in Christ Jesus those who had been far off, were made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

The language of our text is as applicable to the state of the converted among *us* Gentiles, as it was to the case of the converts at Ephesus; for all such among us—“*Were far off,—are made nigh in Christ Jesus,—by the blood of Christ.*”

I. WE WERE SOMETIMES FAR OFF. This intimates *distance*, and signifies that we were ignorant of God, chap. iv. 18. Destitute of his image, chap. v. 22—24. Under his displeasure, chap. ii. 1—3. Unconnected with his Church, ver. 11, 12.

What a significant idea! How far were we from a true and experimental knowledge of God,—of the things of God; how far from any resemblance to his moral image; from any conduct, but such as merited his displeasure! And we were in disposition, in affliction, equally distant from his Church,—his people.

The Apostle’s words include another idea connected with this distance; namely, the time.

Ye were *sometimes* far off. It was with many of us a long time; with all a *miserable* time, and a *dangerous* time.

But, thanks be to God! these times are passed away; our text says, ye *were* far off.

Here let us pause, and think on what we *were*.

What the *peculiar nature* of our erroneous path, our remote situation, was, is comparatively of little consequence. Some of us were lost in the cares of the world. Some were deluded by the deceitfulness of riches. The lust of other things held some captive; while others were intoxicated by pleasure, or enchanted by worldly science, or drawn away by the meaner things which attract the attention of sordid souls. It is enough, more than enough, *that we were far from God*. Let us now turn our attention to our present situations.

II. NOW ARE WE MADE NIGH. These words convey to the mind ideas of *Relationship,—Friendship,—Union,—and Communion*.

Relationship. Real Christians are children of God, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18; Galatians iii. 26. They are bretheren, Matthew xxiii. 8. And they are as properly related, in a religious or spiritual sense, both to God and to each other, as men are related to each other by natural ties. See John i. 12, 13; Galatians iii. 26.

Friendship. Among men of the world, all relatives are not friends; but Christians are in a state of friendship with God, with Christ, and with each other, John xv. 14, 15; 1 John iii. 14.

Union. Jesus is the vine; Christians are the branches, John xv. 5. He is the body; they are the members, chapter v. 30. They are members, too, one of another, Rom. xii. 5; 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 13. Again, they are represented as stones of the same building, Jesus being the chief corner-stone, verse 19—22.

Communion. They have intercourse with God, as a child with his parent, (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6.) as a man with his friend. They have communion with each other. See 1 John i. 3, 6, 7; Col. iii. 16.

Thus we are made nigh; and our text leads us in the next place to consider how this blessed, this important change has been effected.

III. IN CHRIST JESUS, BY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

In Christ Jesus. He is our Mediator; God with God; man with men. See 1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. xii. 24.

It is here the distant parties meet. Here the Gentile meets the Jew, ver. 14. Here the returning sinner meets a gracious, a merciful, a forgiving God, chap. i. 6, 7, and ver. 18. Here persons that were distant, that were hostile, ~~them~~, cordially, unite

and perfectly agree. See Gal. iii. 28, 29; Col. iii. 11; John x. 16. Here ever Saul of Tarsus meets the followers of Jesus of Nazareth on amicable terms; and the same mouth, which before breathed out threatening and slaughter, now breathes nothing but friendship and love. Here all *real* Christians of every sect and name meet; and *here* all men may know that they are disciples of Christ, because they love one another, John xiii. 35. Here, too, they all ascribe their salvation to Jesus; and glory in being "made nigh,"

By the blood of Christ. Under the old dispensation, this blood was yearly typified by that of the paschal lamb, Exod. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. v. 7;—daily, by that of the sacrificial lamb, Exod. xxix. 38, 39; John i. 29;—and frequently, by that of other sacrifices, Heb. chap. ix. and x. Covenants were ratified by blood, Exod. xxiv. 8; Heb. ix. 18—20; "and without shedding of blood is no remission," Heb. ix. 22. "We enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," Heb. x. 19. Almost every important circumstance connected with our salvation has reference to the blood of Christ. We are *redeemed* by his blood, chap. i. 7; Col. i. 14; 1 Pet. i. 19; Rev. v. 9; *justified* by his blood, Rom. v. 9; *washed, cleansed*, by his blood, 1 John i. 7; Rev. i. 5, and vii. 14; *we conquer* through his blood, Rev. xii. 11; *we are made nigh by his blood*.

The shedding of the blood of Christ was the last grand act, as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind; a sacrifice, without which we could have no hope; without which we must have perished, Acts iv. 10, 12. Well, then, may such frequent mention be made of the *blood of Christ*. It is all in vain to talk of reconciliation with God—nearness to God—to the people of God, but by the *blood of Jesus*.

Let me close the subject by inquiring,

Where are *you*? Some, I fear, are still "*afar off*." How awful is your situation! Here you assemble with the people of God; you stand, you sit near them; perhaps you dwell under the same roof with some of them; but, alas! in a religious point of view, at what a vast distance are your souls from God and his people! Perhaps you stand this moment near the verge of hell! Oh, that my voice could reach and recal you! Rather, may the voice of that "blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel," reach you, and bring you nigh!

Ye who are made nigh, remember where you were ; remember your deliverance and your deliverer. Think on your present situation, thus strikingly described, Heb. xii. 22—24. Let the caution, Heb. iii. 12—14, have its proper influence on your conduct ; and you may with safety and propriety adopt the following triumphant language, Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

GAMNA.

XXXVI. THE CHRISTIAN CALLING.

EPH. iv. 1.

“ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.”

IN the arrangements of the wise and prudent, the means employed are always proportioned to the ends proposed. And although the Divine Being, in some few instances, may to all human perception work without the agency of means, and in others employ such as are apparently unequal to the mighty task allotted them ; yet, usually, when God has any important work to be performed, he raises up instruments suited to the employ. When it pleased him that among the Gentiles should be preached the unsearchable riches of Christ, he engaged in this service Saul of Tarsus, a man of extensive learning, and of the most scrupulous integrity ; whose whole soul was absorbed in whatever he undertook, and who possessed fortitude superior to danger and to death. Paul having preached to the Gentiles at Ephesus and other places, was *for this cause* persecuted by the Jews, and eventually sent prisoner to Rome, Acts xix. *et seq.* Thence he wrote this epistle ; in which, far from retracting any thing he had advanced, or regretting that he had so publicly advanced it, he still glories in that gospel by which the Gentiles were admitted to equal privileges with the Jews, chap. ii. 10, to iii. 8. In my text he applies the subject, beseeching them that they

would walk worthy of their vocation (or calling). Now *we* are in circumstances similar to those of the Ephesians; *we* also are of *the Gentiles*; who were once “not a people; but are now called to be the people of the Lord.” Let us therefore consider,

I. THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN CALLING. By “the *vocation*” of which the Apostle speaks, we may understand their invitation to pardon and glory, by the gospel: and then, as the gospel offers *doctrines* to be believed, *privileges* to be enjoyed, and *duties to be performed*, we are led to the subject of *Christian profession and practice*. Or if we refer the word “vocation” to the titles by which they were designated, as saints, &c., chap. i. 1; still this calling was such as always implied the *practice of piety*; so that, in both points of view, there seems to be a reference to what we usually mean by the word “calling;” a man’s “*profession, employment, or business of life*.” A calling may be esteemed on account of its *intrinsic goodness*, because it is honest, useful, &c.; on account of the *reputation* it brings; or on account of the *profit* it affords. In relation to the *first* of these, we observe that the Christian’s is a *holy* calling, 2 Tim. i. 9. It is holy in its *Author*—the Holy God, 1 Pet. i. 15; who calls by *holy means*, the *holy Gospel*, preached by *holy ministers*, 1 Thess. ii. 10; assisted by the *Holy Ghost*, 1 Thess. i. 5; 1 Pet. i. 12; to a *holy end*, holiness of heart and life in the present world, 2 Cor. vii. 1; and a translation to a state of holiness, perfect and unchangeable. In respect of the *reputation* it brings, this is,

2. An *honourable* calling, Phil. iii. 14; Heb. iii. 1; not in the esteem of *fools*; but of the *wise*; being employment under the most *honourable master*, 1 Tim. i. 17; and in a situation of the *highest trust* and *importance*; and conducing to the most *honourable results*; the glory of God, and the salvation of his fallen, yet *intelligent* and *immortal* creatures: in their exoneration from the heaviest guilt; emancipation from the vilest slavery,—that of brutal lusts; and of the arch-apostate, Titus iii. 3—5; 2 Tim. ii. 26. Restoration from moral disease and death, Matt. ix. 12; Ephesians ii. 1. Freedom from eternal disgrace and misery, Romans vi. 23. Exaltation to the highest dignity, 1 John iii. 1. Participation of the divine nature, and inheritance of heavenly glory, Rev. iii. 21. Hence it is,

3. A *profitable* calling, 1 Tim. iv. 8. Here we must look at both sides of the account. On the one hand, what are the *expenses* and *sacrifices* required? on the other, what are the *proceeds*—what the *profits* yielded? The *only* sacrifices required are of things *worthless* or *hurtful*; every thing that consists with the honour and happiness of man being allowed, Phil. iv. 8; the *profits* are, what persons usually aim at in their respective callings. One proposes a *competency*: our calling affords this, either bringing our enjoyments up to our desires, or our desires down to our enjoyments, Phil. iv. 11. and 19. Another labours now, that he may sometime retire from the fatigue and perplexity of business; he therefore proposes *peace* and *comfort*; see Rom. xiv. 17; Acts ix. 31. A third looks towards the closing scenes of life, and aims at *security* and *full provision* in *old age*: adduce Psalm lxxxiv. 11; Isa. xlv. 4; Rom. viii. 31, *et seq.*

II. THE OBLIGATION OF THE CALLING. That ye walk *WORTHY*, &c. To do this, a man must,

1. Study the *principles* and *rules* of his calling. Hear Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, chap. i. 17. Mark the end proposed, ver. 18, and chap. iv. 14.

2. Be emulous to claim the *privileges* of the calling, ch. iii. 16, *et seq.*

3. He must cultivate the *spirit* of the calling. The warrior cherishes the martial spirit; the politician that of intrigue, &c.; but ye walk with all lowliness, &c., ver 2, 3

4. Perform the *duties* of the calling in religious life, chap. iv. 20—24, and v. 5, 15—21; in civil life, chap. iv. 25, to v. 6; in domestic life, v. 22, to vi. 9. He who neglects this, 1. *disgraces* and injures the profession, Phil. iii. 18; Heb. vi. 6; and 2. *misses* the *end* of the profession, Heb. xii. 14. Wherefore consider the *Author* of your calling; and “Be ye followers of God as dear children, and *walk in love*,” &c., chap. v. 1, 2; 1 John iv. 7—16; in *mercy* to the miserable, the unthankful, and the offending, Luke vi. 35; Matt. v. 44. Consider the *ministers* of your calling, Christ and his apostles, and “*walk* so as ye have them for an ensample,” Phil. iii. 17. Imitate their *disinterestedness*, 2 Cor. xii. 14, 15; Phil. ii. 4—8; their *self-denial* and *fortitude*, 1 Cor. ix. 27; and Heb. xii. 2, 3; their fervent, pious *zeal*, Phil. iii. 12—14. Consider the *dignity* of your

calling; and let nothing sordid or dishonourable ever *stain your character*: but “walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his *kingdom* and glory,” 1 Thess. ii. 12. In order to this, consider much and frequently the *object* of your calling—ETERNAL GLORY, 1 Pet. v. 10; and “set your affections on things above; and have your conversation in heaven,” Phil. iii. 20. The Christian’s peculiar profession will suffer nothing by being brought into comparison with the most innocent and honourable of human employments: its *motives* are *purser* and *more noble*; its *encouragements* greater; and its *end* more glorious. And it will appear to still greater advantage, by being contrasted with the *unholy*, *dishonourable*, and *ruinous* drudgery of sin. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable,” &c., 1 Cor. xv. 58.

ZETA.

XXXVII. FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

PHIL. i. 11.

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.”

SUCH was the Apostle’s desire and prayer for the Philippian Christians. He had previously preached among them the gospel of Christ; and witnessed the demonstration of its power in their personal salvation. But when he wrote this epistle, he was a “prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles.” Through the malice of his enemies, he was not permitted either to engage in the public work of the ministry, or to visit the churches of the saints. But his devout and zealous spirit could not be confined in the contracted precincts of his degraded dungeon. While he was detained from his regular ministerial labours, he wrote some of his most excellent epistles, to establish and encourage the

primitive believers in the faith and hope of the gospel. And to his pastoral instructions he added fervent prayers and intercession for the welfare of his Christian brethren. The text constitutes a part of a comprehensive prayer, which he offered to "the God of all grace," for the Philippian church: the whole of which is appropriate and sublime, and well adapted for general utility. The words selected for our present consideration, regard the nature—the fruits—the author—and the results of righteousness.

I. THE NATURE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. We may observe, First, *The term righteousness is diversified in its meaning.* To ascertain its precise signification, we should consider the different objects of its application. Sometimes it refers to the Divine Being, and signifies the purity of his nature, and the perfection of his works, Psalm cxlv. 17. It also applied to the Redeemer, both in his personal and mediatorial character, 2 Cor. v. 21. We also read of the righteousness of the law, which implies uniform obedience to all its precepts and ordinances, as a perfect rule of moral rectitude, Psalm xix. 7. Righteousness is also possessed by man as a believer, and it is *relative* in its character—*internal* in its principle—and *practical* in its influence. This is the evangelical righteousness of faith in Christ, Phil. iii. 9.

Secondly, *Righteousness in the text signifies personal holiness.* Sin has corrupted all our moral powers, and rendered our souls unholy. But when we believe in Christ, we are freely justified and "saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." The divine nature is imparted, which consists in "righteousness and true holiness," as a meetness for "the inheritance of the saints in light." Thus, the work of God in the souls of his people is called, "the *work of righteousness*, and the *kingdom of righteousness*, and grace reigning *through righteousness* unto eternal life."

II. THE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. This part of our subject suggests the following truths. First, *Christian righteousness is productive of gracious fruits.* These fruits are both *eternal* in the heart, and *external* in the life. The Apostle speaks of the former, the latter will follow as a natural consequence. The fruits of righteousness include the exercises of unfeigned faith—peace which passeth all understanding—the

love of God shed abroad in the heart—the testimony of a good conscience—the humble, heavenly mind of Christ—the implantation of every spiritual grace—joy unspeakable, and full of glory—the indwelling, and operations of the Spirit, producing holy principles and dispositions, which practically appear “in all holy conversation and godliness.”

Secondly, *The fruits of righteousness are abundant and progressive.* Hence the Apostle prays that the Philippians might be *filled* with those fruits, which implies an *increasing plenitude* of grace and holiness. Perhaps he had reference to a very fruitful tree, that has all its branches laden with rich fruit, in a high state of perfection. It is certain, all the righteous are *really*, though not *equally*, fruitful. Some bring forth “thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.” To be *filled* with the fruits of righteousness, is to realize *exalted degrees* of piety—to grow in every Christian attainment—to “comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ; and be *filled* with all the fulness of God.” There is a *fulness* of grace here, and of glory hereafter, which we should desire and pray to enjoy.

III. THE AUTHOR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. It is “by Jesus Christ.” We are naturally unrighteous, and therefore all our righteousness, as Christians, is of the Lord, through the mediation of the Saviour. First, *Righteousness is purchased by Jesus Christ as our Redeemer.* For this purpose, he was manifested in the flesh—fulfilled the righteousness of the law—died a sacrifice for the sins of the world—“made reconciliation for iniquity—and brought in everlasting righteousness, which is unto, and upon, all them that believe.” Jesus Christ having thus opened a new and living way of pardon and salvation, is justly styled, “The Lord our righteousness;” because, by his atonement, he has *merited* righteousness and eternal glory for perishing sinners, Rom. iii. 22—26.

Secondly, *Righteousness is derived from Jesus Christ as our Saviour.* It is only through *believing* we can be saved; and faith is counted for righteousness, by virtue of the precious blood of Christ, that ratified the everlasting covenant. In him there is a plenitude of grace for the salvation of sinners; and when we believe in his name, he is “made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” We receive of

his fulness every grace and blessing to constitute us *relatively, personally, and practically* righteous. And through union with him, and participation of the influences of his Spirit, we become fruitful in righteousness, “that we may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ,” John xv. 1—8.

IV. THE RESULTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. “Unto the glory and praise of God.” The *essential glory* of the Divine essence is infinite, and therefore unchangeable; but the *manifestation* of his *glorious perfections* is the original design of all his works. Consider, First, Righteousness is, “to the glory and praise of God,” *in the scheme of redemption*. In this, we behold the *glory* of the wisdom, power, love, mercy, justice, and holiness of God displayed; in creating, preserving, redeeming, and saving rebellious sinners. God is evidently *glorified* in the origin, author, work, design, and effects of our redemption. His glory is thus made manifest both to angels and men, Rev. iv. 11; Luke ii. 14; 2 Cor. iii. 11.

Secondly, Righteousness is “to the glory and praise of God,” *in the subjects of salvation*. They are conscious that all their good comes from him; and, therefore, they gratefully ascribe praise and adoration unto him for all his benefits, Ps. ciii. 1—5. And in all their designs and deportment they “show forth his praise, do all to his glory, and glorify him in their bodies and spirits, which are his.” And in the kingdom of heaven they will ascribe salvation, glory, honour, and power, unto God and the Lamb, for ever and ever, Rev. i. 5, 6. Let these observations stimulate our desires—promote our devotion—and inspire us with praise.

ETA.

XXXVIII. THE GOSPEL REVEALED.

COLOS. I. 27.

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory."

THE various blessings and privileges of the Mosaic dispensation were confined to the children of Israel, as the Lord's peculiar people. But whatever religious advantages the Jews enjoyed under the Old Testament, which distinguished them from all other nations, it is evident that the coming of the Messiah was designed to abolish this distinction, that "the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles." And hence, the birth of Christ was to give "joy to all people," Luke ii. 10. His death was a reconciliation both for Jews and Gentiles, Eph. ii. 16. And his gospel was to be preached "in every nation, and to every creature," Mark xvi. 15; that whoever believed his doctrine might be saved, and obtain eternal life. And when St. Paul was called to engage in the work of the ministry, he received a *special* dispensation to become "an apostle of the Gentiles," to whom he was sent to bear the name of Christ, and teach them the way to salvation. But the calling of the Gentiles *to be the fellow-heirs* with the Jews, and incorporated into *the same body* of the visible church, was a mystery hidden from former ages and generations, till Jesus Christ sent his ambassadors to "turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," by the preaching of the gospel. And when they heard the truth, many of them gladly embraced it by faith, and received its saving benefits. And in the text, the Apostle congratulates both the Jewish and the Gentile converts at Colosse, as believers in Christ, and subjects of his grace. *To whom God would make known, &c.* These words describe,

I. THE PECULIAR CHARACTER OF THE GOSPEL. "The riches of the glory of this mystery." This concise description of the gospel is sublime and appropriate; and presents us with correct

views of the intrinsic excellences it possesses, and the gracious effects it produces.

First, *The gospel is RICHES*. It is a *rich display* of the Divine perfections in the scheme of redemption. A *rich and unspeakable gift* of mercy and grace. A *rich invaluable treasure*, and plenitude of spiritual and eternal blessings. It *enriches* the soul with salvation, and constitutes those who embrace it “rich in faith, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.” These are “riches of grace—riches of glory—the unsearchable riches of Christ—and the durable riches of righteousness.”

Secondly, *The gospel is GLORIOUS*. It is *glorious* in its *Author* and *origin*, who is the God of essential glory, and infinite perfection. *Glorious* in its *constitution* and *contents*, as a covenant of grace and message of salvation. *Glorious* in its *blessings* and *privileges*, offering pardon and peace to the penitent, and the present enjoyment of every spiritual grace and consolation to them that believe. *Glorious* in its *designs* and *operations*, promoting the honour of God, and diffusing a saving knowledge of the truth, by its enlightening and renovating influence, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; Tit. ii. 11, 12. *Glorious* in its *promises* and *recompense*, leading the believer to the final possession of eternal glory in the world to come.

Thirdly, *The gospel is MYSTERIOUS*. When the term *mystery* is applied to the gospel, it does not signify the impossibility of knowing it, but rather, that it contains such profound truths as we are naturally unacquainted with, and could not know, but through the medium of revelation. This is evident from the text, which states, that the gospel is a *mystery*, and asserts, that it is “made known among the Gentiles.” The doctrines of the gospel—the properties of religion—and the glories of heaven, are *mysterious* subjects, unknown to human reason, and but *partially* and *imperfectly* known by faith to the most eminent saints, 1 Tim. iii. 16: 2 Cor. v. 7; 1 John iii. 2.

II. THE GRACIOUS REVELATION OF THE GOSPEL. “To whom God would make known,” &c. The Lord has revealed the gospel to mankind at different periods of time, under every dispensation of his grace, and through various instruments and mediums of instruction, Heb. i. 1, 2.

First, *the gospel is made known in its written revelation.*

The Scriptures reveal the will of God, and clearly unfold the gospel of Christ for the salvation of sinners. Moses in the law wrote of the Messiah, and to Him gave all the prophets and apostles witness. And thus the gospel was *obscurely* made known in the promises, types, and predictions of the Old Testament, but is more *fully* revealed in the writings, testimonies, and doctrines of the New, Rom. xv. 4; 2 Tim. i. 10, also iii. 16, 17.

Secondly, *The gospel is made known in its public ministration.* Under the law, the Lord appointed a priesthood, and sent his servants to "minister in holy things," and to instruct the people. When Jesus Christ abolished the legal, and established the evangelical priesthood, he appointed a new ministry of the gospel to make known its truths, and enforce its claims, Ephesians iv. 11, 12. When he was on earth he preached his own gospel, and engaged his apostles in the same important work; and when he rose from the dead, he renewed and enlarged their commission, Matthew xxviii. 19, 20; Luke xxiv. 46, 47. The gospel is preached that it may be "made known" in its doctrines, precepts, and promises.

Thirdly, *The gospel is made known in its internal application.* The word *written* and *preached* cannot save us, except it be revealed *in our hearts*. The Holy Ghost is given to apply the gospel, and convince "the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." He applied it to the understanding—to the conscience—to the will, and to the affections, 1 Thess. i. 5; 1 Pet. i. 22.

III. THE PERSONAL INFLUENCE OF THE GOSPEL. "Which is Christ in you the hope of glory." Observe,

First, *The gospel must be received in faith.* It is a faithful revelation and report of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, which we should *fully credit* as an important fact. It is also a message of salvation, which we must *cordially embrace* in all its personal benefits and saving effects, Romans i. 16.

Secondly, *The gospel inspires the believer with hope.* When it is received in the heart, its possessors are "begotten again unto a lively hope." The Christian's hope has its *present objects* and *exercise* in reference to this life, but its *final object* is eternal *glory*, which the Lord has promised to them that love him.

Thirdly, *The gospel furnishes the GROUND of our hope,*

“Christ in you,” &c. The indwelling of the Saviour by his Spirit constitutes, together with an interest in his blood, the only rational and Scriptural foundation of the Christian’s hope. Christ not only preached unto you—professed *by* you—dwelling among you—but *in you*, as your present Saviour, and sure ground of your hope for futurity. By way of conclusion, we may remark, the gospel claims our gratitude—involves our interests—demands our attention—and secures our salvation.

ETA.

XXXIX. THE FAITHFUL SAYING.

1 TIM. i. 15.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

It has been said, with a great degree of truth, that “man is an animal fond of novelty.” “The eye is not satisfied with seeing,” &c. To curiosity we must confess ourselves indebted for many of our improvements in knowledge, and for many of the comforts of life: yet it is evident that every subject that offers itself to the eye—that every report that reaches the ear—is not equally worthy of notice. One report has no foundation in *truth*; and another though *true*, contains nothing of *interest*; therefore we disregard them both. Such reports, on the contrary, as are both *true* and *important*, have certainly a claim on our consideration. Of this description is that contained in the text. This is a *faithful* saying: it is true, worthy of *all* acceptance; it is important. Let us notice,

I. WHAT THIS SAYING IMPORTS. “Christ Jesus came,” &c. Under this division of our discourse, two subjects present themselves. 1. The character and condition of those whose salvation is proposed. 2. The character and undertaking of the Saviour. 1. He came to save *sinners*,—*unholy* in *heart*, and *wicked* in *life*; for though the term “sinner” has more direct

reference to the outward conduct, yet, the inspired writers never regard sin as a something *merely accidental*, but ascribe it to a permanent *evil principle* within; affirming, that the *heart* is "deceitful," &c.; out of it "proceed murders," &c.; the tree is known by the fruit," &c. The *source* of action is evil, and hence the *commandments* of God are *broken*. From the *character* of mankind, it is easy to perceive that their *condition* must be *guilty*, and a *lost* one. Sin is "a transgression of the law," which is "*holy, just, and good*;" it is always attended with *guilt*. Guilt exposes to *punishment*, Rom. vi. 23; Gal. iii. 10. Jesus came to seek and to save them that were "*lost*" to the best purposes of their being, to religious services, joys, anticipations; and so lost as to be *incapable of restoring themselves*, either as it respects *atonement* or *sanctification*, a *title* to heaven, or *meetness* for it. In them we see fit subjects for a Saviour's operations; and our text shews us a Saviour suited to their case. "*Christ Jesus* came," &c. The apostle, in saying "*Christ Jesus came into the world*," seems to refer to his *former state*, of which, in other places, he speaks more explicitly. ("Who being in the form of God," &c. Col. i. 15; Phil. ii. 6; 1 Tim. iii. 16.) But our *present* business is not so much with his person as with his *undertaking*. This is expressed in the names he bears; "*Christ*," the Anointed; "*Jesus*," the Saviour; so that his title offers him as, 1. the *anointed* Saviour; *appointed* as persons were under the law, by *anointing*, to the offices of prophet, priest, or king; and so not acting merely from himself, but under a *commission* from the Father of Spirits; see Matthew xii. 18; John x. 36; Luke iv. 18. From *this* we might conclude him to be, 2. an *all-sufficient* Saviour; both *able* and *willing* to accomplish what he had undertaken. He *has proved* himself to be such. Instance his *atonement*, in which he *willingly* "*gave himself a ransom*;" his *leading captivity captive*; and his *continued intercession*. He is *able* and *willing* to save to the *uttermost*. Such is the doctrine of the text: proceed we therefore to consider,

II. THE PROPRIETY OF ACCEPTING IT. It claims acceptance, 1, as "*a faithful saying*," and therefore recommends its subject as a *matter of fact*, on proper evidence. The gospel was supported by numerous and incontestible *miracles*; wrought by Jesus, a person of *inflexible virtue*; in whom the *ancient prophecies* met; and who sealed the *truth* of what he taught

with his blood; who, according to his own prediction, rose from the dead, and was seen alive by *many pious* men, who could *not* be deceived themselves; and had *no* motive to deceive others; and who *published* the fact, in spite of *danger* and *death*. Its faithfulness has been also proved by *many*, in *every* age, who have applied to him, and *been* saved. The *truth* of this saying being established, it appears *worthy* of being accepted, because it is, 2. an *elevating* saying; and offers its subject as *matter of noble contemplation*. The powers of man, and of other rationals, were given that they might be employed on the *noblest, grandest* subjects. In *this* the *divine attributes* are seen to harmonize. The claims of *justice* are admitted, and satisfied; *mercy* melts over the miseries of a ruined world; *wisdom* devises, and *love* executes the wondrous plan, on which God can be *just*, and the justifier, &c. *Angels* desire to *look into it*. But if it is worthy of *their* contemplation, the saying is worthy of our acceptance, for it is *to us*, 3. an *interesting* saying, *we are the very persons* on whose behalf the Saviour exerts himself. *We* the *sinner*s, *wretches*, &c. &c., and it is *peculiarly* interesting, inasmuch as it exhibits not only the sufficient, but the *only* Saviour. Whence it follows, that this saying is worthy of *cordial, unqualified, immediate* acceptance. 1. *Cordial*. You have two opinions given you, on some subject of science, &c.; you adopt one, in preference to the other; yet it possesses no importance to affect your *heart*: but if you hear of peace after a ruinous war; or a favourable termination of a cause, in which yourself and friends are deeply concerned, you clasp the tidings with *cordial affection*. *Here* are tidings of “glory to God, peace on earth,” and everlasting benefit. 2. *Unqualified* acceptance;—in *all its bearings*. It teaches us that we must avoid *sin now*, if we will escape *hell hereafter*, &c. It is worthy, &c. The pleasures of *sin* are poor, degrading, temporary, damning; those of *religion*, noble and everlasting. 3. *Immediate* acceptance. Danger cannot be *too soon* escaped; happiness too soon secured. Every thing depends on our acceptance of this saying. Prudence, reason, the word, and the Spirit of God dictate our accepting it *now*. This subject is earnestly recommended, 1. To all who have *neglected* it till now. *Why* neglected? Because *other* things were more important? Alas! they are either *vanished*, or *vanishing*. Or because that it is

equally *unimportant*? Consider, once more, the consequences. 2. To *mourners in Zion*. Did Jesus come to save sinners? then why these doubts—because you are *sinners*? you are the very persons he came to save. Because you are *great* sinners? 'tis worthy of *ALL* acceptance, consequently of yours; for it reaches even, 3. to *backsliders*. You *may* be saved. David and Peter were. 4. *The obstinately wicked* should leave this passage, and consider, Heb. ii. 2, 3. And, 5, *Believers* should *proceed* in this salvation, from infancy to maturity, from earth to heaven.

ZETA.

XL. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 TIM. iii. 16, 17.

“All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God.” &c.

FROM the ignorance and error to which we are naturally subject, a divine revelation is evidently necessary to our purity and peace. Of this, the wisest and the best among the ancient heathen were convinced, and from the known goodness of God, they concluded that what was so essential to our happiness might rationally be expected.

This conclusion, so gratifying to hope, was justified by analogy. The subserviency of the inferior creation to the human race—the continued preservation of mankind—and the constant provision made for their accommodation—all evinced their interest in God's fatherly care; and as he so kindly consulted their *temporal* comfort, it was natural to infer that he could not be regardless of their *eternal* concerns.

Now this revelation, if given, must certainly contain all that is necessary to direct our faith, to correct our errors, and to

regulate our practice. Such in fact are the contents of the Bible; and such in effect our text pronounces them: "All Scripture," &c. In these words we are taught,

I. THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE. "All Scripture is given," &c.

1. *The word "Scripture" signifies writing*, and must here mean that which was written in the Old Testament, by the direction of God, for the benefit of mankind. This was spoken at first by the impulse of God's Holy Spirit, 2 Peter i. 19—21. And it is recorded for our instruction and comfort, Rom. xv. 4.

2. *All this Scripture is given by the inspiration of God.* By inspiration is meant, a supernatural influence of God on the mind; and when it is said that all scripture is given by inspiration, it must imply, that it was always written under this divine influence, for the most important purposes. But from the different parts of the sacred writings, it appears they must have been given by different degrees of inspiration.* Some parts, for instance, could be given only by the inspiration of *superintendency*; by which the Holy Ghost moved holy men to record certain things which they already knew, and preserved them from error in recording what was thus distinctly prescribed.

Some parts of Scripture must have been given by the inspiration of *elevation*; by which the Holy Ghost enabled the sacred writers, in many instances, to think, and write, and arrange their subjects, in a manner much superior to their natural capacities. This is often conspicuous in their addresses to God; and in various descriptions which they give of him and his works.

Some parts of Scripture must have been given by the inspiration of *suggestion*; when both thoughts and language were entirely dictated by the Holy Ghost. This must have been the case with respect to all divine messages, either to individuals or communities,—respecting all mysteries, or truths before unknown,—and all predictions of future events. But these thoughts, by being dictated in language most familiar to the respective penmen, must have occasioned considerable diversity of style.

3. That all Scripture was given by inspiration, is certain.—From the undoubted *inspiration of the Apostle* who asserts it:

* See Doddridge and Dick on inspiration.

whose apostleship was demonstrated by incontestible proofs, 2 Corinthians xii. 12.—From the *careful preservation of Scripture*, by the providence of God; through which it remains undiminished and uncorrupted.—From the *efficacy of Scripture*, in converting immortal souls; turning them from the love and practice of all sin, Psalm xix 7; James i. 18.—And from its *holy tendency*, to engage men in God's service, John xvii. 17. Hence, from the full inspiration of the Old Testament scripture, it must follow that the writings of the New Testament are certainly of equal authority: for the same God who spoke by the prophets, spake also by his son Jesus Christ, Hebrews i. 1, 2. The word which Christ began to speak, was continued by the apostles; and God confirmed their testimony, by enduing them with the power of working miracles, and the spirit of prophecy, Hebrews ii. 3, 4; Rev. xix. 10.

Thus the whole book of Scripture is evidently given by the inspiration of God, and must now be complete; for it concludes with solemnly prohibiting any alteration in it, Rev. xxii. 18, 19. It must not be augmented, for it is in no respect defective; it must not be diminished, for it contains nothing superfluous; therefore it is a perfect rule both of faith and practice. This will more fully appear by considering,

II. THE EXTENSIVE UTILITY OF SCRIPTURE. "It is profitable," &c.

1. "*For doctrine.*" To make us wise unto salvation, verse 15. By shewing us our need of salvation: being sinful, condemned, and helpless, Romans iii. 20—23. Our redemption by Christ; as God incarnate, John i. 1—14, and iii. 17. The way of salvation, by faith in Christ; which implies coming to him, Matt. xi. 28; receiving him, John i. 12; and abiding in him, 1 John ii. 28. The blessings of salvation; pardon, peace, purity and eternal life, Romans v. 1, and vi. 22.

2. "*For reproof.*" To expose our practical errors: our transgressions, as implying unjust self-perversion, Romans vi. 13; Job xxxiii. 27; our impenitence, as contempt of God, Psalm cvii. 11; our self-confidence, as destructive, Jer. xvii. 5, 6; Isaiah i. 11.

3. "*For correction.*" To reclaim us from our errors, by prescribing the way of truth, Psalm cxix. 30;—the way of sound

faith, Psalm xxv. 14 ;—of happy experience, Psalm lxxxix. 15, 16 ;—and of acceptable obedience, Heb. xi. 5, and xiii. 20, 21.

4. *For instruction in righteousness.*” To preserve us from all destructive courses, and guide us to eternal glory. To preserve us—from all fatal mistakes in judgment, Psalm cxix. 128 ; and from all sinful deviations in practice, Psalm xvii. 4. To guide us—in the darkest seasons, Psalm cxix. 105 ; by the best way, Psalm xxiii. 3 ; to the highest enjoyments, Ps. xxxvii. 34, and lxxiii. 24.

5. Being thus profitable, *it makes the man of God perfect.* By man of God, is meant the Christian minister ; who must be a man devoted to God’s service, before he is employed by Christ to teach others. He must be converted from sin, Luke xxii. 32 ; he must follow Christ, Matthew iv. 19 ; and he must love Christ, John, xxi. 15—17. The Scripture makes him perfect in personal piety, by rendering him fully and exactly conformable to God’s will, Romans, vi. 17, 18. It furnishes him for all good works, as a Christian teacher. To instruct the ignorant, by sound doctrine ; to expose error, by suitable reproof ; to reclaim wanderers, by kind correction ; and to guide the faithful, by instruction in righteousness.

APPLICATION. 1. *From the inspiration of Scripture, learn its supreme authority ; and in all things ever make it your rule.* The rule of your *scrutiny*, in all matters of conscience ; hereby prove all religious instruction, all devotional feelings, and all doubtful impressions on the mind, 1 Thess. v. 21. The rule of your *faith* ; believing all that it reveals, 2 Chron. xx. 20. The rule of your *experience* ; seeing all that it exhibits, Phil. iii. 12. The rule of your *practice* ; fulfilling all that it requires, Exod. xxiv. 7. The rule of your *hope* ; expecting all that it promises, Ps. cxix. 49. The rule of your *counsel* ; by which you teach others ; whether your families, your ignorant neighbours, or the Church of Christ, 1 Peter iv. 11.

2. *From the extensive utility of Scripture, learn your obligations as consistent believers ; to be thankful for this inestimable benefit, Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20 ;—to search it diligently, that you may preserve your piety, Psalm cxix. 11 ; and that you may be useful to others, Psalm xxxvii. 30, 31 ; and to endeavour that this precious gift may be generally extended—*

to your families, Deut. vi. 6, 7;—to the rising generation, Proverbs, xxii. 6; Psalm cxix. 9; and to the perishing heathen, Psalm cvii. 20. Labour as well as pray, that God's "way may be made known, and his saving health among all nations;" so shall God bless you, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him, Psalm lxvii. 2, 7.

ALPHA.

XLI. MINISTERING SPIRITS.

HEB. i. 14.

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

MAN is naturally an inquisitive creature; and under the influence of an intense thirst for the acquisition of knowledge, he is led to ask questions, read books, pursue studies, and use all the means that can augment his stock of information. On all the topics connected with our interests as citizens of the world, we gain ample information by perusing the works of men; but the Bible is the chief medium, through which, information on religious subjects is freely and circumstantially communicated. Some of those subjects are frequently brought forward, largely discussed, and pointedly insisted on; others are only incidentally mentioned, as they do not form essential parts in the economy of human redemption. The text refers to one of those subjects; and though our salvation might have been secured, even if we had never known it, yet it cannot be uninteresting to men in general; and it is peculiarly calculated to administer comfort to every pious soul. We will therefore consider,

I. THE NATURE OF ANGELS;—they are *spirits*. Many of the ancient philosophers, and not a few of the Christian fathers, believed that angels were clothed with some kind of bodies composed of the purest particles of matter, which they called *ætherial*; but the Scriptures speak of them as spirits, Psalm civ. 4. As

spirits, they possess natural and moral perfections; of the former, they have, 1st, *understandings, clear and comprehensive*. Their knowledge is vastly extended; the wisdom of an angel is proverbial. David was said to be as an angel of the Lord, to discern good and bad; and wise, according to the wisdom of an angel, 2 Sam. xiv. 17—20. The angels know much of God, they behold the displays of his glory, they are his ministers to do his pleasure; they are acquainted with his works, they sang together, and shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid, Job xxxviii. 7. And they know much of what is doing in the world.—2. *As spirits, they possess great power*; David declares, “they excel in strength,” Ps. ciii. 20. We deem that man the strongest, who can put in motion the largest quantity of matter; what cannot an angel do? It is generally thought, that the immense slaughter of all the first-born of Egypt was accomplished by an angel. The hundred and eighty-five thousand, of the army of Sennacherib, that fell in one night, were slain by an angel, 2 Kings xix. 35. It was an angel that inflicted the pestilence upon Israel, when seventy thousand were cut off, 2 Sam. xxiv. 15. And Herod was smitten by an angel, when eaten up with worms, Acts xii. 23. *As spirits, they possess great activity, or swiftness of motion*. They are represented as “being full of wing:” how easily and swiftly do they transport themselves from place to place! even the finer particles of matter are amazingly volatile. How inconceivable is the velocity of light! but how tardy, compared to the speed of an angel!—4. *As spirits, they are endowed with liberty*. This is essential to a moral agent. It is said of fallen angels, that they left their first estate; it was a personal act, and a matter of choice: ‘Freely they stood, who stood; and fell, who fell: not free, what proof could they have given of true allegiance?’ &c. And as spirits, they possess moral perfections; such as *purity of affections*; they are eminently termed *holy angels*:—*benevolence of disposition*; how ardent is their zeal for God! Some are termed seraphim, which signifies *burning*. How much they delight in our happiness! How glad to bear the tidings of peace on earth, and good will towards men!

II. THE CHARGE OF ANGELS. *Them who shall be heirs*, &c. Whether they minister to men promiscuously, I dare not say; the Bible is silent on the subject: and how far it is con-

sistent with reason to suppose an angel ministering to a sot or a debauchee, I leave you to judge. *The heirs of salvation* are the objects of their charge. Salvation here means that final and complete deliverance, which God will accomplish in behalf of his saints, and that ineffable glory and inexpressible happiness, with which they will be invested. Salvation is an *inheritance*—glorious in its nature—satisfying in its enjoyment—eternal in its duration. Oh! how unlike earthly inheritances. *An heir* is a person who has a just right to a certain possession—who can make out a legal title to it—but who is in a state of minority, and not of age to possess it. All this applies to the saints; they are born of God, and “if children, then heirs of God;” this gives them a right to their heavenly inheritance—they have a legal title in the promise—but they are at present in a state of minority.

III. THE CHARACTER OF THEIR MINISTRATION. In considering the ministration of angels, we must be careful not to attribute to them any work that will interfere with the influence of the Holy Ghost upon the soul of man. Man is a totally depraved creature; and the whole of his salvation, from its commencement to its close, is accomplished by the Divine Spirit, without any intermediate agency. 1. *Angels minister to our instruction, when we are liable to miss our providential way.* How dark and intricate in many instances is the path we have to tread; but how clear and extended the perceptions of angels! The following Scriptures sufficiently prove that they direct the *heirs of salvation* in the time of difficulty, Genesis xvi. 9; Judges xiii. 13, 14; Matthew i. 20; ii. 13; Acts x. 3.—2. *Angels minister to our deliverance in the time of danger,* 2 Kings vi. 17; Psalm xxxiv. 7; xci. 11; Daniel iii. 25; vi. 22; Acts xii. 7.—3. *Angels minister to our comfort in the seasons of distress.* In our Saviour’s deepest agony, there appeared unto him an angel, strengthening him, Luke xxii. 43. And as the strength communicated unquestionably referred to some consolatory thoughts suggested to his mind, may not we also derive *comfort* from such a source?—4. *Angels minister to our release from the body, and our admittance into heaven.* Witness Lazarus, Luke xvi. 22; see 2 Peter i. 11. The ministration of angels is, 1. *Divine in its authority*: they are sent. 2. *Active in its nature*: they are sent forth. 3. *Universal in its agency*:

all ministering spirits. 4. *Benevolent in its results*: they minister to our salvation.—INFER 1st, the wonderful care of God over us in appointing us such ministers; how various their orders, how immense their numbers, Dan. vii. 10.—2. What a motive to induce us to hate sin; the *holy* angels are with us, and how hateful must sin be in their sight.—3. From the office of angels, let us learn where true greatness lies, Matt. xx. 26.—4. From the activity and zeal of angels in doing good, let us emulate their example.

BETA.

XLII. THE GREAT SALVATION.

HEB. ii. 3.

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”

MAN is, in a great degree, the creature of *habit* and *prejudice*. *Early* prejudices, &c., are peculiarly strong; and, *of these*, our *religious* ones are perhaps stronger than any others. We do not wonder, therefore, that many of the Jews were very backward to relinquish a system of religion which was of *divine origin*, in which they had been *carefully educated*; and on their observance of which, they had *long* believed their present safety and future happiness to depend. Nor is it very surprising that in some cases,—even after they were convinced of the Saviour’s Messiahship,—they should not, at first, understand that his death was intended to set aside the whole system of ceremonies and typical sacrifice; or even, that they should still feel an attachment to those things on which they had heretofore placed so much dependence. To perfect what was deficient in their faith and practice, was one part of the design of this epistle; in which, while the author confesses the *Mosaic dispensation* to be *glorious*, he asserts, in *every respect*, the *superiority* of the *Christian*;—

and hence infers our *greater obligation*;—and inquires, “if the word,” &c., verse 2, 3. He exalts the salvation; supposes it slighted;—and anticipates the consequence. We notice,

I. THE SALVATION ITSELF. From the context it clearly appears, that by the “*great salvation*,”—which at the first began to be *spoken by the Lord*,—the Apostle particularly meant the Gospel, as opposed to the Law, which was the word *spoken by angels*: as we learn from Psalm lxviii. 17; Acts vii. 35; Gal. iii. 19. But as this is only by a motonomy, and with reference to the subjects of which it treats, let us hear what it says of the *salvation itself*;—and of the *terms* on which it may be ours. This salvation principally relates to the soul, and to eternity. It is, 1st, a change in *the man*; and 2nd, in his *condition*; 3rd, *begun and carried on in time*; but, 4th, reaching onward through *endless futurity*. 1st, it affects the various powers of *the soul*; enlightens the understanding; rectifies the judgment; regulates the affections; gives a new bias to the will, &c.; and delivers “from blindness,” Luke ii. 30—32, and iv. 18; “hardness of heart,” Zechariah xii. 10; and “contempt of God’s word and commandments,” Hebrews viii. 10. 2nd, it is a change in man’s *condition*; formerly he was *guilty*, but now he is *pardoned*; then *condemned*, now *justified*—regarded as innocent; then *exposed to endless wrath*, now—to die would be *endless gain*. Hence it follows, that salvation is, 3rd, a *present blessing*, not the business of purgatory or of death, but of *this “accepted time.”* Yet, 4th, it runs into the *future*; and, in perfect possession and exercise of glorified *souls and bodies*—in the *worship of God*, and the *enjoyment* of his heaven—is *everlasting salvation*. If these remarks are not *new*, yet we should “give *earnest heed* to the things which we *have heard*,” concerning also *the terms* of this salvation. Now “the word spoken by the Lord,” &c., requires, 1. *Self-denial*;—in *wicked things*, Tit. ii. 12; sometimes in *innocent things*, Matt. xvi. 24; and in the *merit* of our *best works*, Luke xviii. 9. See also Titus iii. 4—7. 2. *Prayer* public, social, private.—3. *Watchfulness*.—4. *Forgiveness of enemies*, Matt. xviii. 21—35. And lastly, in order to *eternal salvation*, a patient *continuance* in “*well doing*,” Rom. ii. 6, 7. This is a *great salvation*.

1. It is the work of a *great Author*; see ch. i; as it respects Him by whom it was designed; “God, who spake,” John iii. 16: Him who *procured* and *published* it; “the brightness,”

&c., ch. i. 3; who procured it with a *great price*; his “precious blood:” and as it respects him who *applies* it; the Holy Ghost. Even “the word of truth, the *gospel* of our *salvation*,” was written under *his* influence; and if we are actually *enlightened, renewed, strengthened, comforted, saved*, it is “the same Spirit” that worketh all in all.

2. Producing *great effects*. The mental and *moral chaos* is reduced to *order* and *harmony*; wandering children are *restored* to their Heavenly Father, &c., &c.; therefore,

3. Of *great importance* to us. I say to *us*, men. A salvation intended for the *world*; embracing the *whole* of man; *body* and *soul*; and eternity as well as time. How natural to suppose that such a salvation would be heartily and universally received. But we must notice,

II. THE NEGLECTERS OF THIS SALVATION. 1. There can be no doubt whether those belong to this description, who never think of it from day to day, and from year to year; they neither *pursue* nor *desire* it. A *second* class of neglecters are those who do not entirely forget it, yet treat it only as a *secondary* concern. Observe, the question is not about *despising* this salvation, and treating it with *contempt*; but about *neglecting* to treat it according to its *great importance*. If we do not seek it “*first*,” and as the “*one thing needful*,” our merely *thinking* and *talking* of it will be *uscleless*. Hence it follows, 3. That those are to be considered as neglecters, who hope for the end, while they neglect the *means*—the very terms without which no salvation can be obtained. These may be either Pharisees, who hope to *merit* heaven without the least reliance on the merits of the Saviour; or Antinomians, who are content to live and die strangers to the grace by which believers *are* saved.

Let us not build upon the sand; but rather,

III. PROPOSE THE GENERAL QUESTION OF THE TEXT, “*How*,” &c.

From the *ease* and *indifference* of mankind, one would suppose they had found a satisfactory answer. If so, what is it? The fool hath said, “there is *no* God,” Did we believe this, our conduct would be more consistent with our sentiments than now. We confess that there is a *holy* God, a just God. How then can we escape if we neglect his offers of mercy? Through his *deficiency of power*, or *wisdom*? Read Isa. xlv. 5—19, and Ps. cxxxix. 7—12. Or through an *excess of goodness*?

Consider, this salvation is the *last*, the *greatest* effort of divine wisdom and love; it *engages the whole Trinity*; and if this be not effectual, what can be? The apostle looks through *all possibility* and sees *no* hope; and his question is equal to an affirmation,—“we shall NOT escape *deserved punishment*”;—the perfection of unholy tempers;—the stinging remorse of conscience;—the persecution of devils;—the flames of hell;—and the strokes of almighty vengeance, Proverbs i. 24—27.—1. Remark the miserable condition of human nature. 2. Admire divine goodness. 3. In order to our damnation, we need not be blasphemers, &c.—neglect *only* will ruin us. 4. *Abused mercy* will give *keenest* torment; but 5. The GREAT salvation meets *all* our need.

ZETA.

XLIII. THE INCARNATION AND PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

HEB. ii. 17.

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

THIS epistle was addressed to the Hebrews—the posterity of Abraham—a people highly favoured of the Lord, and to whom he had imparted the most distinguished tokens of his regard, Rom. ix. 4, 5. They worshipped God according to the rites and ceremonies of the Levitical economy, to which they were accustomed to attach the greatest importance. Those of them who were converted to Christianity, still retained many of the religious prejudices which had grown out of early education, and had been strengthened by subsequent practice. Hence the Apostle saw the necessity of furnishing their minds with the clearest and strongest evidences, both of the *superiority* and

spirituality of the Gospel dispensation. This he did in the commencement of this epistle.

Again, in their renunciation of Judaism, and adherence to Christianity, they were exposed to violent and severe persecution; on this account, it became necessary to furnish them with consolations adequate to their sufferings, and motives suited to their encouragement and perseverance. This the Apostle does, in the chapter from which the text is selected. After impressing their minds with the awful consequences which would arise from neglecting a salvation replete with the most glorious advantages, and imposing the most sacred obligations, he proceeds—to declare the personal excellency of Christ, in His pre-eminence above angels, ver. 5—7. And after removing the scandal of the cross, he asserts the incarnation of Christ; and states the reason and design of it—that he might accomplish the work of redemption—and sustain the office of the priesthood. *Wherefore in all things, &c.* Let us consider,

I. THE STATE TO WHICH HE CONFORMED.

II. THE OFFICE UPON WHICH HE ENTERED.

III. THE RULE BY WHICH HE ACTED.

I. THE STATE TO WHICH HE CONFORMED—“*He was made like unto his brethren,*” &c. It is evident, from the peculiar phraseology of the apostle, in this and many other places where he speaks of the incarnation of Christ,—that the subject of his descriptions was no ordinary being, but one who had an existence previous to His appearance in our world,—and in whom the assumption of our nature was an act of the greatest condescension, as well as a display of the most astonishing humility, Phil. ii. 6—8.

In order to discern the meaning, and feel the force of such descriptions, we must have the fullest convictions of the *Divinity* of Jesus Christ, and behold in His advent nothing less than the *incarnation of Deity*. Without such a persuasion, many of the expressions alluded to would be not only unmeaning, but absurd. Such was the majesty and dignity of the Person here spoken of. *He was made like unto his brethren, &c.* This declaration must be qualified, as admitting certain limitations, in reference both to the degrees of conformity, and also to the end assigned. He was not made like unto His brethren in sin—this would have been destructive of the end proposed, as the apostle else-

where observes, ch. iv. 15. This conformity may be considered as comprising three things.

1. *A conformity to the properties and affections of which human nature is constituted.* It was an absolute, not an imaginary conformity—not a visionary appearance. It was real, and entire—not a mere body animated by the Deity, as some have supposed. Human nature requires the union of body and spirit. The whole of the Redeemer's history furnishes ample proof that he assumed human nature in its perfect state. He possessed the affections connatural to a human, rational soul;—as love, joy, sorrow, &c. His body also was subject to hunger, thirst, cold, pain, &c.

2. *A conformity to the trials and temptations of which human nature is liable.* This was necessary, for the reason assigned by the apostle in the last verse. He was tried by His *enemies*;—their subtlety and deceit,—their malice and hatred, &c. He was tried by His *disciples*;—their too frequent ambition,—their improper curiosity,—their unbelieving distrust, &c. He was severely assaulted, and violently persecuted by Satan, &c.

3. *A conformity to the sufferings and death to which human nature is obnoxious.* His life was a continued scene of suffering. His death was of the most painful and agonizing kind. His path from the manger to the cross was *rugged* and *thorny*. This conformity was necessary, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, &c. This leads us to consider,

II. THE OFFICE UPON WHICH HE ENTERED. The promised Messiah was to be the great high priest of the people of God. This had been typified and predicted. At the appointed time it was fully displayed in the Son of God, who appeared invested with all the solemnities that were necessary for the constitution and confirmation of such a priest. Concerning this priesthood, two things are specified in the text—*The character of the priest, and the nature of the office.*

1. *The character of the priest.* That he might be a *merciful* and *faithful* high priest. 1. *Merciful.* Mercy is a disposition of the heart, excited and brought into exercise by an apprehension of misery, to the relief of which it directs its influence. In Christ this disposition dwelt in all its softness and tenderness. In His breast it still reigns and triumphs. He lays all the miseries of His people to heart—so caring for them

as to relieve them. He waits to receive every penitent sinner into the arms of His mercy. This disposition was drawn forth by His own temptations and sufferings. 2. *Faithful*. This fidelity was displayed *in the discharge of His office*,—in which he was faithful to Him that appointed Him, chapter iii. 2; exercising in every part of his work the strictest integrity, and the most unimpeachable righteousness. It was displayed also in *the care of His people*—watching over them, &c.—condescending to all their wants and weaknesses—sympathizing with them in all their sorrows—and succouring them in all their temptations.

2. *The nature of the office*. It comprises two objects.

1. *Things appertaining to God*. He is the Mediator between God and man—transacting all affairs between them. He presides over the House of God; regulating and inspiring every part of its worship; securing the glory of the Divine perfections, and promoting the purposes of human salvation. 2. *To make reconciliation for the sins of the people*. This He does by the sacrificial atonement of His death, and by the cleansing efficacy of His blood. By the one He propitiates the Father—by the other He purifies the sinner. We observe,

III. THE RULE BY WHICH HE ACTED. *It behoved Him*. This was a rule of *necessity*—of *propriety*—and of *compassion*.

1. Of *necessity*. It must be so, on supposition that He was to be a High Priest. God having designed him to that office, it was indispensably necessary that “*He should be made*,” &c.; all the duties and employments of the priesthood required an assumption of human nature.

2. Of *propriety*. It was proper that the Redeemer should be the kinsman of the redeemed—that the High Priest for man should be taken from among men, chap. v. I. That the sacrifice should partake of the nature for which it was to atone.

3. Of *compassion*. It was necessary that he should be a suffering, in order to his being a sympathizing, High Priest—and so great was his love to man, that he submitted to all that was necessary to his salvation.

EPSILON.

XLIV. THE THRONE OF GRACE.

HEB. iv. 15, 16.

“ For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” &c.

THIS epistle, designed for the use of such as had been educated in the Jewish Religion, the writer begins, by shewing the superiority of Jesus Christ to any other messenger by whom God had made known his will to man; and hence the superiority of the Christian dispensation to every other.

The Hebrews *justly* esteemed themselves the most privileged of all people, in respect to religious blessings; so that in proving Christianity to be *superior to Judaism*, he, in effect, proved it to be the *best* system of religion ever offered to the world. Concerning the dignity of the Mediator, it is observed that he is superior to the former *prophets*, chap. i. 1, 2.: and to *angels*; witness his *creative* and *supporting* acts; and his *better name* by inheritance, ver. 2—12. In the 2nd chapter his humiliation is noticed; and the reason of it, ver. 9—17.; whence the apostle exhorts them, chap. iii. 1, to consider the “*Apostle and High Priest*,” &c.; and proceeds to compare him with Moses and Aaron, the two greatest, as *prophet* and *high priest* of the former dispensation. He *excels Moses*, ver. 3—6. What is said by way of comparison and contrast of the “*High Priest* of our profession,” with those of the order of Aaron, will appear as we proceed with this discourse, in which it is intended to confine our meditations chiefly to two subjects:—

The exhortation given, “ Let us come boldly,” &c., and the reason assigned, “ for we have not an High Priest.”

I. THE EXHORTATION GIVEN. On which we observe,

First, the place to which we should come—“ The throne of grace.” A throne is a royal seat, on which a king in his public character receives homage, distributes justice, &c.; it therefore implies government. Yet it gives no idea of the *disposition* of the governor. Indeed, if his government be good, he must be *differently* disposed towards persons of different *character*.

Accordingly, to give us some knowledge of God, “whose throne is in the heavens,” certain qualities are ascribed to it. We read of the throne of his *holiness*, Psalm xlvii. 8. *Justice* and *judgment* are his habitation, Psalm lxxxix. 14. These views the *law* could give, but it is the *Gospel* that shews us a “throne of *grace*.” Something of *grace* was, indeed, known before the coming of Christ; and in the “throne of *grace*” the apostle seems to allude to the mercy-seat, on which the blood of the atonement was sprinkled, and where God promised to meet his people. Yet the law was comparatively a *severe* and *shadowy* dispensation; whereas “*grace* and *truth* came by Jesus Christ,” yea, he is “*full* of *grace* and *truth*,” on which account the apostle proposes, *Secondly*, The manner in which we should come,—“*boldly*,” not *carelessly*, *presumptuously*, *irreverently*. The example of the pious forbids this. It is also forbidden by the apostle himself, chap. xii. 28.; as well as by, *Thirdly*, The business *on* which we should come. 1. “To obtain *mercy*.” Mercy respects misery. As the word is here used, it seems to refer to *pardon*. So Paul “obtained *mercy*,” 1 Timothy i. 13. So in this epistle the Lord says, “I will be merciful,” &c., chap. viii. 12. A criminal approaching his offended sovereign to sue for mercy should come in a manner very different from that of haughty carelessness. 2. “And find *grace*,” &c. Divine assistance of the *kind*, and in the *measure*, our wants require. See 2 Cor. xii. 9. We are *ignorant*, and need *enlightening* grace;—disordered, we need *renewing* grace;—weak, and tempted both by painful and pleasing things, we need *strengthening* grace;—afflicted, we need *comforting* grace, &c. Now “God giveth more *grace*,” therefore we wait till he “the God of peace,” make us perfect, &c., chapter xii. 20, 21.

Every season is in *some* sense a time of need, but some seasons are *peculiarly* so—seasons of *severe temptation* and *suffering*, of *sickness*, *old age*, and *death*. Of the *sufficiency* of divine goodness for *all* our purposes, read St. Paul’s opinion in his prayer for the Ephesians, chapter iii. verse 14, *et seq.* This confidence is supported by,

II. THE REASON ASSIGNED—“For we have,” &c. Several things here claim our notice, and it may serve to encourage us in our addresses, if we reflect on the *suitableness* of our *High Priest*; the *excellence* of his *sacrifice*; the *perpetuity* of his

priesthood; his *situation* in the heavens; his *sympathy* with us in our sorrow. 1. We have an High Priest. A priest is an officer appointed to stand between God and sinners, and to offer not only "gifts," but also "sacrifices for sin." In a state of innocence, perhaps, every man might have been his own priest; but now "no man taketh this honour unto himself," &c., chapter v. 4., and as he is a priest by *divine appointment*, so he has a decided superiority over the Aaronic priests; they were *sinners*, verse 3.; he is "*without sin*," see also chapter vii. verse 26.; Let us therefore "*hold fast* our profession."—2. The nature of his office required a *sacrifice*; for the apostle repeats, chapter viii. verse 3, "every high priest is ordained to offer gifts," &c.; wherefore "it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to *offer*." Here let us raise our thoughts from *types* to the *reality*, and from the *earthly* to the *heavenly* temple, see chapter x. verse 1—7. His is "a *more excellent* ministry—a *better* covenant; and "Christ being come," &c., chapter ix. 11, 12. Hence a *second* encouragement, ver. 13, 14.—4. The law made many priests, which were prevented by death from continuing; "but the word of the oath maketh the Son, who is consecrated *for evermore*." See chapter vii. 17, *et seq.* Whence a *third* encouragement, ver. 25.—When we make "his *situation* in the heavens" a ground of *comfort*, we do so by Scripture warrant; see ver. 14, chap. viii. 1, and ix. 24, and 1 John ii. 1. He is a friend *in the court* of heaven, to plead our cause.—5. What has been said implies another particular, expressly remarked in our text; his "*feeling*," &c., having been "in all points tempted," &c.; by *prosperity*, when "the kingdoms of the world," &c. were offered him; by *adversity*, in his *life* of sorrows, and *death* of agony:—was tempted to a *misapplication* of *time* and *talents*; was grieved with the *ingratitude*, *folly*, and *sin* of *foes* and *friends*; so that "he knows what *your* temptations mean," &c. Review the subject. We were sinners;—but, 1. We have a High Priest, *appointed of God*, *holy*, &c. 2. He gave *himself* a ransom. 3. This ransom is *accepted*; and he has in consequence "an *unchangeable* priesthood;" which, 4. He exercises "in the *presence* of God; while he, 5. "in his measure *feels* afresh what every member bears." Need we now *change* the subject, and enquire, "*If*," &c. chap. ii. 2, or remind you that "he," &c. chap. x. 28, and

ask "*of how*," &c. v. 29—31. "Having, therefore," my *sinful, penitent, tempted, doubting, or believing*, "brethren, boldness," &c. ver. 19—25.

ZETA.

XLV. THE WAY TO WISDOM.

JAMES i. 5.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

Few things in the world have higher reputation, or are in greater request, than wisdom. Those who are supposed to possess it have credit for being superior to their neighbours, and are revered on account of the accomplishment. To attain it, many engage in long and expensive travels; and many others labour in study and experiment; and their toil is not useless, for "wisdom is profitable to direct," and "excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness." Much, however, of what obtains the *title* of wisdom, has but very little *right* to the honourable appellation; for the word is too often associated with qualifications of very trifling value. But, in our text, the apostle had certainly in view objects of the highest consequence; he speaks of what is *genuine*, and gives directions accordingly. Let us therefore consider,

I. THE BLESSING NEEDED;—"If any lack *wisdom*." Wisdom has been defined "the power of judging rightly." This definition is very general, and applies to any matter of knowledge, art, science, &c.; but any writer is usually the best expositor of his own work. We apply this principle, and take chap. iii. 17, to explain the thing under consideration. Now, *that* judgment is generally the most correct which is founded on *experiment*, and on an actual exhibition of the properties of any subject. This advantage the apostle affords us; and from his description of its qualities, we learn that the wisdom of

which he speaks embraces *moral goodness*, as well as *intellectual*,—and that it belongs to the *heart*, as well as to the *understanding*. “It is *pure*” in its *source*; it is from above, from the Father of lights; chap. i. 17. In its *nature*, what emanates from unmixed purity must be pure; as is the fountain, such are its streams; as is the sun, such is its light. Pure in its *intentions*; not proposing to satisfy the soul with what is sordid, beastly, diabolical, chap. iii. 14, 15.; but with the beauty and purity of holiness. In its *operations*, promoting whatsoever things are true, honest, pure, &c. Phil. iv. 8.; having for its *end* the pure delights of heaven. It is “*peaceable*;” it brings peace to its *possessor*, who reposes on supreme wisdom, and power, and goodness. It assists him to take an *extensive view* of things, and affords him a pleasing anticipation of their happy *result*; and therefore keeps him collected and calm, amidst the conflicting elements of political, ecclesiastical, or domestic strife. Instance St. Paul, Acts xx. 24.; Isaiah xxvi. 3. *With regard to others*,—it disposes him to *desire* peace, 1 Thess. v. 13.; to *preserve* and *promote* peace; and to *follow* it when it seems to retire, Eph. iv. 2, 3.; Gen. xiii, 8, 9. You perceive we have identified religion with wisdom; for in Scripture the terms are synonymous, Job. xxviii. 28. It is “*gentle*,” which signifies the state of a mind at ease; affable to *equals* and *inferiors*; it ‘never employs the harsher way, when love will do the deed;’—“*easy to be entreated*,” to whatever reason, mercy, or benevolence requires, or duty warrants;—“*full of mercy*,” ready to *pardon*;—ready to *help*;—“*full of good fruits*,” required by a *good God*;—and producing *good effects*; God’s glory and man’s welfare;—“*without partiality*,” to nation, family, political party, sect, favourite;—“*without hypocrisy*.” It is Christianity in *appearance*, connected with Christianity in *truth*; “*good fruit*,” produced by good *principles*; holiness of life, resulting from holiness of heart. This supposes a vital union with the Saviour, John xv. 4, 5.; and a renewal in the spirit of the mind. To obtain this we have,

II THE DUTY RECOMMENDED:—*petition*. Note the *generality* of the recommendation,—“If *any* of you.” We are not likely to take any measures to obtain what we are not convinced we want. Therefore it may not be amiss to observe further, that wisdom, 1st, proposes the *most important ends*;—to

diminish, remove, and prevent misery in ourselves and others; and to produce the greatest possible sum of happiness. But then, 2. it takes into its account the *whole* of man, body and soul;—and the whole of *his existence*, in time and eternity. And, 3. it avails itself of the *most proper means* to effect its purposes. Hence it follows, that wisdom *is lacked* by the self-sufficient—the proud—and contentious; and by *all* those who bestow all their thoughts on the body and time, and of course neglect the soul and eternity. Also, by those who hope for heaven in *any other* way than *sovereign wisdom* has appointed;—whether by a trust in their own works, or by an appeal to the unqualified mercy of God. Mark the person to whom the petition is to be made. Let him ask of God; not of saints or angels, who are unable either to pardon our folly or inform our souls; but of God, who is *able* and *willing* to make us wise, good, and happy, but has made *prayer* a *condition* of our receiving, Ezek. xxxvi. 37.; Luke xi. 9—13. Observe the *manner* of petitioning. Ask *sincerely*; remembering that God searcheth the heart, Matt. vi. 18.; John iv. 24. *Humbly*; as beggars, dependent and needy. *Fervently*; as sensible of your necessity, and of the greatness of the favour asked. *Consistently*; avoiding folly, and using every means of obtaining wisdom, Isa. i. 16—18.; Prov. ii. 1—7. *Perseveringly*; confessing that nothing can serve as a substitute for this wisdom; and that after having received much, we may yet receive more, 2 Pet. iii. 18; Eph. iii. 14—19. *Constitutionally*; according to the appointment of the Christian code, John xiv 6, 14, and xvi. 23. *Belieringly*; see the context, ver. 6, 8. In order to your asking in faith, take to yourselves,

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT AFFORDED. “God giveth—to all men—liberally—and upbraideth not; and it (wisdom) *shall* be given him.” Have we nothing to offer by way of purchase? He “giveth.” Admit that our views of ourselves are justly very low; he “giveth to *all*,” of whom the *best* are undeserving. But he giveth to *all*, even to the *worst*, Luke vi. 35. He giveth to all “*liberally*,” both freely and plentifully. Instance, in worldly blessings;—in the gift of his Son;—in the abundance of gracious means and opportunities. It must be confessed that, with our past advantages, we *ought* to have been much wiser. Still the text meets our case; for he giveth *with-*

out *upbraiding* us with our stupidity, and unlikeness to himself; whether arising from past *indolence* and neglect, or from *contempt* of instruction, Heb. viii. 12.—“It *shall* be given him.” For your encouragement, here you may rely on the goodness of God’s nature, Psalm xxxvi. 7, and xxxiv. 5, 9. His past dealings with *others*;—Solomon, Paul, &c. With *yourselves*;—he has given you ten thousand blessings, *unasked*. What then may not be obtained in answer to petition, offered according to his own commandment? Lastly, you have his unfailing word of promise. “It *shall* be given,” Heb. viii. 10, 11, Behold the *philosopher*, rather the *wise man*!—aspire after—attain—and *preserve* the character.

ZETA.

XLVI. THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

JAMES i. 25.

“Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

IN the 18th verse of this chapter, the apostle asserts that the Word of God is the instrument which he employs in our salvation. “Of his own will begat he us with,” &c. He then urges us to a practical improvement of God’s word, v. 19, 22. And in the succeeding verses he illustrates his counsel, and shews its importance, by pertinent examples. By the example of a careless hearer, v. 23, 24, and of a faithful hearer in our text. “But whoso looketh,” &c. These words describe what a consistent Christian does—what he is—and what he enjoys.

I. WHAT HE DOES. He looketh into the perfect law of liberty. This description of the Christian’s conduct leads us to notice,

1. *The object of his attention*, here specified;—the perfect law of liberty.

The perfect law of liberty is the gospel revelation. This is evident, because the law of liberty is the word of truth, by which God begets us; and this word is the gospel, 1 Peter i. 23, 25. The law of liberty is the rule by which we shall be judged, James ii. 12; and this rule is the word of Christ, John xii. 48; Rom. ii. 16.

The gospel is a LAW. By a competent judge, a law is defined to be, "A rule of conduct, prescribed by the supreme authority in a state, commanding what is right, and prohibiting what is wrong." This being admitted, the gospel is evidently a law; as it is distinguished by every thing requisite to constitute a law.—Is a law designed as a rule of conduct? so is the gospel. Those to whom the gospel is preached, are taught to "observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded," Matt xxviii. 20. And he, who thus commands us, is called our Lawgiver. Isaiah xxxiii. 22. Is a law prescribed by supreme authority? so is the gospel;—it is the gospel of the blessed God, 1 Tim. i. 11. He requires obedience to it, Rom. xvi. 26; and his authority is indisputable, Ps. xcv. 3—7. Must a law be published for the general benefit? so is the gospel;—it is required by our Lord to be published to every creature in the world. "Go ye," &c. Mark xvi. 15. And this command justifies all the exertions of the most zealous Christians. Those who go on foreign missions, and those who engage in supporting them;—those who are employed in village preaching, and those who promote the Bible and Tract Societies; in so doing, only obey Christ. Is a law enforced by powerful sanctions? so is the gospel;—it is sanctioned by the most encouraging promises, Rom. ii. 6, 7; and by the most alarming threatenings, Rom. ii. 8, 9.

The gospel is the law of LIBERTY. So it is properly called, because it exhibits liberty as our privilege. Liberty from the oppression of Satan, from the curse of God, from the sentence to eternal death, and from the yoke of Jewish ceremonies, Isa. lxi. 1; 2 Cor. iii. 17. It prescribes the method of obtaining this liberty; by coming to Christ, learning of him, obeying him, trusting in him, Matt. xi. 28, 29. It guards our liberty when enjoyed; by urging us to preserve it as an invaluable privilege, Gal. v. 1: and by exposing the efforts of our enemies to deprive us of it, Ps. xvii. 4. and cix. 4, 5. Hence liberty is ascribed to the instrumentality of the gospel, John viii. 31, 32.

The gospel is the PERFECT law of liberty. It is indeed perfect, because it is a complete law, to which nothing need be added, Its doctrines are fully sufficient to direct our faith, its precepts are fully sufficient to regulate our practice, and its sanctions are fully sufficient to engage our concern, 2 Tim. iii. 15—17. It is a pure law, from which nothing must be taken, Rev. xxii. 19;—and it is a perpetual law, which will endure for ever, and not be abolished by any superior dispensation of grace, 1 Pet. i. 25; Heb. xii. 28.—Having considered the object of the Christian's attention, let us observe,

2. *His exercise with reference to this object.* He looketh into it. He looketh into it as a *repository*; in allusion to the cherubim looking towards the mercy-seat, which covered the ark of the covenant, Exod. xxv. 20. "Toward the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubims be." The ark contained the tables of the law, and is therefore called the ark of the covenant. The Christian looks into the gospel, God's new covenant; desiring to be enriched with its treasures;—with the divine favour, represented by the mercy-seat, Psalm lxxx. 1.; and with God's laws written on his heart, which the tables represent, and which God promises, Heb. viii. 10. He looketh into it as a *model*; with concern to be formed by it, Rom. vi. 17. He looketh into it as a *mirror*; with care to improve by its discoveries; to remove all the blemishes it exposes, Psalm cix. 19;—and to add all requisite ornaments, Phil iv. 8; Psalm i. 2. This leads us to notice,

3. *His perseverance in this exercise.* He continueth therein. He continues in the pursuit of gospel benefits, 2 Pet. iii. 14; Jude ii. 21. He continues in the practice of gospel duties, Heb. xii. 1; Tit. ii. 12. He continues therein, though allured by the pleasures of sin; for he has respect unto the recompense of reward, Heb. xi. 25, 26. He continues, though menaced; for he sees him who is invisible, Heb. xi. 27. He continues, though tempted; for he resists Satan, 1 Pet. v. 9; James iv. 7. He continues, though glory is delayed; for he has long patience, James v. 8; Job xiv. 14. From what a consistent Christian does, it appears,

II. WHAT HE IS. He is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work.

1. *He is an exemplary hearer of God's word.* A *respectful* hearer; not a despiser of the word. Some despise the word

by never hearing it, and even by rejecting it as fabulous. Jer. viii. 9; Prov. xiii. 18, and xxviii. 9. But he esteems it as a perfect rule in all matters of piety and morality, Psalm cxix. 128. A *serious* hearer; not a careless one, like the wayside hearer. The careless hearer readily lets the devil take away the word from him, Luke viii. 12. But he hides it in his heart, Psalm cxix. 11; and prays over it, Psalm cxix. 18. He is a *diligent* hearer; not a slothful one. He delights in God's word, Job xxiii. 12; and is swift to hear it, at all convenient seasons, James i. 19. He is a *retentive* hearer; not a forgetful one. God's word is his treasure, Psalm xix. 10. Hence he often surveys it, and thinks on it, and talks of it, cxix. 30, and 78, and 172.

2. *He is an actual doer of God's word*, or the work it requires. The work of *piety*; faith in, and love to God, Gal. v. 6; Dent. xxx. 19, 20. The work of *benevolence*: of kindness to mankind, Gal. v. 13, and vi. 10. The work of *self-purification*, 2 Cor. vii. 1; Luke xi. 28. This leads us to observe,

III. WHAT HE ENJOYS. He enjoys blessedness; he shall be blessed in his deed.

1. *He shall be blessed.* Be consistent Christians,—look into, &c. Then you shall be blessed with *God's approbation* of your conduct, Rom. xiv. 17, 18. The continuance of it, Psalm lxxxix. 15, and the assurance of it, Heb. xi. 5. With sacred *comfort*; "Great peace," Psalm cxix. 165. Peace of conscience and with God. With the honour of being useful to your families, Deut. v. 29;—and the world, Matt. v. 12—16. With the *grateful benedictions of others*, Job xxix. 13. And with *heavenly felicity*, Rev. xxii. 14.

2. *He shall be blessed in his deed.* This promise—*Preserves the honour of divine grace.* You shall be blessed *in*, not *for* your deed. Be not arrogant, Luke xvi. 10. Psalm cxv. 1. *It promotes practical piety.* You shall be blessed *in*, not *without* your deed. Do not presume. To be happy, you must be holy, Matt. vii. 21; Heb. xii. 14. *It vindicates scriptural godliness from the charge of melancholy.* You shall be blessed, happy, not melancholy, in your deed. The work of righteousness is peace, Isa xxxii. 17, and xlvi. 18. *It encourages the hope of the faithful.* You shall be blessed, Psalm lxxxiv. 11. And God who makes the promise, has all blessedness at his

disposal. He is true to fulfil his word. He is kind to design your happiness. And all-sufficient to execute his purposes, Ps. c. 5. Hence, blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, and walketh in his ways, Ps. cxxviii. 1.

ALPHA.

XLVII. GOD'S ADOPTING LOVE.

1 JOHN iii. 1.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

WHEN the Danish missionaries, stationed in Malabar, set some of their converts to translate a catechism, in which it was asserted that Christians become the sons of God, one of the translators was startled, and said, "It is too much! Let me rather render it, 'they shall be permitted to kiss his feet.' " We cannot wonder at this, since even St John appears quite overpowered by the same sentiment, and filled with rapturous amazement at the love of God therein exhibited. "Behold," he exclaims, "what manner of love," how vast, unparalleled, and transcendent, "the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called," and constituted—not dazzling geniuses, renowned philosophers, invincible heroes, imperial monarchs,—no, but "sons of God," the high, the omnipotent, the everlasting Jehovah! But this high title, together with the privileges of adoption, belong exclusively to believers in Christ. In John i. 12, 13, we see that men do not become the sons of God, by being naturally descended from this or that father, nor by having the title conferred on them by men like themselves, but by God's granting them that privilege through faith.

In order to enter into the apostle's views and feelings, let us consider,

I. THE ORIGINAL STATE OF THOSE WHOM GOD ADOPTS. What were they? They were "children of wrath, even as

others." As men, they were the creatures of God; but as sinners, they were,

1. *Criminals*, guilty both in principle and practice of rebellion against God. Traitors to the Majesty of heaven. Hating, spurning, and violating all the divine laws, they robbed their Maker and Benefactor of his just due, and exposed themselves to his righteous displeasure.

2. *Servants, slaves, and captives of sin*. "His servants ye are to whom ye yield yourselves to obey," &c. Whoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin." The word rendered servant signifies a *slave*, and justly denotes that bondage in which the unconverted are held, while enslaved by their own lusts, appetites, and passions. Yea, they are represented as captives serving under their enemies, and wearing the chains of their oppressors.

3. *Children of Satan, and heirs of hell*. "Ye are of your father the devil," &c. "Children of Belial." Children of wrath." "The wages of sin is death." They had no lot nor portion with the saints, but were liable to eternal misery, 1 Cor. vi. 9; Psalm ix. 17; Rev. xxi. 8.

4. *Spiritually dead*. Not only legally dead, as condemned to eternal death, but actually dead, as being destitute of all spiritual life and energy; dead in trespasses and sins, rotting as it were in the grave of corruption, &c. Can such as these become sons of God? Yes, for such were all who can now call God, "Abba, Father."—We now consider,

II. THE METHOD BY WHICH HE BRINGS THEM INTO HIS FAMILY. This method may justly increase our admiration. Three things were necessary in order to their adoption:—

1. *To provide a pardon for them*. As they were criminals, this was the first step towards their salvation; for while the curse hung over their heads, they could not participate the divine favour. Hence, to satisfy the claims of justice, honour the violated law, and open the door of mercy, Jesus is sent to die, the just for the unjust, to propitiate for their sins and take away the curse, so that God may be just, and yet the justifier of those who believe. Behold! believe! adore!

2. *To subdue their hearts*, so that they may be disposed to receive the mercy of God. To effect this, the Spirit of grace is sent to enlighten, soften, humble, and afflict—to apply the word of truth—to strip them of all their fancied worth and righteous-

ness—then to lead them to the cross—to dispose and enable them to lay hold on the atoning sacrifice by faith. By this act of faith they obtain justification, and God, according to the gospel constitution, receives them as his children. “Ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus.”—“Whosoever believeth is born of God.”

3. *To liberate them from the bondage of sin, and infuse a new principle of life.* This is done at the same time that they obtain pardon through Christ; they then are set free, they awake to righteousness, the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, and becomes thenceforward the vital, actuating, governing principle of their souls.

Such is the method by which sinners are brought into the family of God. Let us now regard,

III. THE DIGNITIES AND PRIVILEGES OF THEIR ADOPTION.

The sons of earthly grandees value themselves highly upon their birth and parentage, although they neither inherit their ancestors' virtues, nor thereby become wiser or more happy. But what is it to be a son of the greatest potentate, compared to being a son of God! The believer may boast a higher descent than the proudest monarch that ever filled a throne. Nor is it an empty boast; for all the sons of God,

1. *Inherit their Father's nature, and moral perfections;* i.e. they resemble him in all his inimitable attributes. They are just, upright, true, merciful, generous, loving, compassionate, &c. They are renewed in the spirit of their minds, in knowledge after the image of him by whom they are created, and begotten anew. And, oh, how amiable, how noble, how sublime, is this heaven-born nature!

2. *They are united by the nearest and tenderest relations to Jesus Christ.* “He is the first-born among many brethren.” “He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying,” &c. This elder brother is their representative, their husband, and their head. He dwells in their hearts by faith, and he ever liveth in Heaven to intercede for them.

3. *They have free access unto the Father on all occasions,* Eph. ii. 18; Rom. v. 2.

4. *They enjoy their heavenly Father's approbation.* His Spirit bears witness to their spirits, that they are his children, Rom. viii. 15, 16; Gal. iv. 6.

5. *They are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom viii. 17. If each had been made heir of a world—a universe, it would have been a trifle compared to this! “To be heirs of God,” &c. What is this but to be entitled to all that the Deity has, or is, or can do, to render them happy? To be heirs of the God of the universe, and joint-heirs with Jesus his only Son, who inherits all; this is to reach the highest eminence to which creatures can be elevated, and to be only less than God!

Hence the lofty titles given them. Priests, princes kings. “Ye are a chosen generation,” &c. “Unto him who hath loved us, &c. and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,” &c.

In life or death, time or eternity, height or depth, they are secure, blessed, and inexpressibly happy.

View all these things in connexion—their original state—the astonishing method adopted towards them—and above all, the transcendent privileges of their adoption, and you will exclaim, “Behold what manner,” &c.

Our subject leads,

1. To correction of the false opinions formed by the world concerning the pious, whom it supposes miserable, low-spirited, unworthy. But “the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

2. To self-examination—are *we* the sons of God?

3. To excitement;—let the sons of God live suitably to their dignity.

DELTA.

XLVIII. THE PROPITIATION.

1 JOHN iv. 10.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

THE interesting and all-important enquiry, “What must I do to be saved?” could never have been answered by the light of nature. How guilty, polluted, and condemned creatures may be restored to the forfeited approbation of their God is a mystery which human reason could never penetrate, as is evident from the numerous futile schemes which have been invented to regain the divine favour.

The supposed intrinsic merit and excellence of human works—bloody sacrifices—grievous austerities, &c.—the senseless dream of purgatory—vague and undefinable notions of Divine mercy: all these, and various other systems equally irrational and unsatisfactory, shew the imperious necessity of a plan of salvation, revealed by God himself. This glorious plan is presented to our view in the words of the text. “Herein is love,” &c.

The word rendered *propitiation*, signifies the *victim* or *aton-ing sacrifice* by which sin is expiated, and for the sake of which God can be propitious to a fallen creature—the *vicarious offering* presented in the sinner’s stead. Our text therefore leads us to observe,

I. THAT THE STATE OF MAN REQUIRED A PROPITIATION. Viewing man as a moral and an accountable agent, who has offended his Maker, the need of a propitiation provided for him will be very obvious, if we reflect,

1. *On the perfection and excellence of the law which he has broken.* It is characterized as “*holy, just, and good.*” Our Lord has comprised it in two essential points, viz. love to God, and love to our neighbour, Matthew xxii. 37—39. This law is—Divine in its *origin*—immutable in its *nature*—reasonable in its *requirements*—benevolent in its *tendency*—indispensable in its *obligations*. Such a law therefore is essentially

good, and ought to be obeyed. The principle which refuses obedience is essentially evil; consequently the person who indulges it must justly deserve punishment, even the penalty which the law denounces, viz. *death eternal*. It follows, that if man who has violated the law be saved from its malediction, while yet the law is perfectly honoured, it must be through a propitiation, an atonement—a substitute offered, and suffering in his stead.

2. *On the inability of man to expiate his offences.* All his doings, sufferings, and sacrifices, can never atone for one of his sins, nor heal a single breach of the divine commands. Even repentance, though indispensable as a *means* of salvation, is in no way an expiation of guilt. It cannot undo what is already done. Its effect is rather prospective, than retrospective. It is no requisition of the law—consequently no satisfaction of its claims; for the law demands innocence and obedience, not repentance. Hence it appears, that some other must provide the propitiation, through which guilty man can be honourably released from the direful penalty of the law.

3. *On the inflexible nature of Divine justice*, which supports the honour of the law, and enforces its claims. Justice is essential to God. Now if man justly merits punishment, justice must inflict that punishment, either on him, or on a proper and an adequate victim that may be justly substituted in its stead. Otherwise justice must relinquish its claims, and thus be proved not essential to God; or else it must be set aside by Divine mercy, and so exhibit its own weakness, and a discord among the Divine perfections. But as we cannot admit either of these blasphemous suppositions, it follows, that no way is left for the exercise of mercy in the salvation of man, but through the medium of a vicarious sacrifice, atonement, or propitiation. We will now shew,

II. THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE PROPITIATION REQUIRED.

Three arguments will establish this proposition:

1. *No creature could or would become a propitiation for man.* No creature can lay God under any obligation. No creature can, strictly speaking, merit any thing from God. Hence, no creature can perform works of supererogation. Much less could any mere creature bear, in a limited time and capacity, the inflictions of infinite justice. And certainly no

creature ever *would* (even if it were possible) make atonement for man. See this finely represented in *Paradise Lost*, book 3.

2. *Jesus Christ is every way adapted to become our propitiation.* "God was manifested in the flesh," &c. His obedience unto death was infinitely meritorious, as he united in himself the Divine and human natures: by the one he was qualified to suffer—by the other infinite value and efficacy were conveyed into his sufferings; so that the law was magnified and made honourable, and every claim of justice satisfied.

3. *The Scriptures every where testify that Jesus Christ is our propitiation.* Here we might produce the numerous *types* of the Old Testament. Isa. liii. 5, 6, 7, 10; Matt. xx. 28; Rom. iii. 24, 25, iv. 25; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13; Col. i. 20; 1 Tim. i. 15; Heb. ix. 22—26; 1 John ii. 2. The Father gave the Son, John iii. 16. The Son gave himself, Gal. i. 4. He offered himself through the Eternal Spirit, Heb. ix. 14. The Sacred Three combine. Hence we observe,

III. THAT THIS PROPITIATION IS A GLORIOUS DISPLAY OF THE LOVE OF GOD. "Herein is love," &c.

The whole Trinity concurred in the work of man's redemption, but the Father is here represented as the first mover. *He* sent his only begotten Son. Some have exhibited Him as burning with implacable rage against mankind, till Christ died to make him merciful. How unscriptural as well as horrid the idea! Christ died because God was merciful—not to *render* him so; but to prepare a channel for his mercy to flow in a stream of salvation to men. "Herein is love," &c. This love is,

1. *Unparalleled in its nature.* Remark, that it was wholly undeserved—entirely unsolicited—perfectly disinterested—contrary to man's own seeking—never invited by any thing good, by any moral excellence in man. "Not that we loved God."

2. *Intense in its ardour.* Here let us regard—the dignity of the Sufferer—the depth of his degradation—the extremity of his sufferings.

3. *Immense in its extent.* It reaches to every age and every clime—to every character and every condition, even to the lowest and most abominable of the human race. It embraces all, John iii. 16.

4. *Glorious in its purpose and final issue.* It not only pro-

cured pardon for sin, and present holiness—but designed nothing less than everlasting glory for all believers. Here “grace reigns through righteousness unto everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Inferences:—

1. How pernicious is the doctrine of Socinianism, which completely destroys this only hope of a penitent, *redemption by Christ!* On the divinity of Christ depends the atonement,—to renounce one is to renounce both. The atonement gone; either man must be absurdly made a meritorious creature, or the perfections of God must be set at variance, and one attribute must vanquish another.

2. How dangerous is the delusion of the self-righteous! They practically renounce, what Socinians professedly deny. No one can receive the atonement, who does not feel his need of it; and if it be not applied, it can be of no avail to any individual.

3. What abundant consolation does this subject afford penitent sinners! Only let them believe, and they shall see the glory of God.

4. In this love of God we are furnished with a rule and a motive for love to each other—“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

DELTA.

XLIX. AN ADDRESS TO THE FALLEN.

REV. ii. 5.

“Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”

THESE words are a part of an epistle which was dictated by the Lord Jesus Christ, and addressed by the apostle John to the church at Ephesus; a church that had been formed by the

apostles themselves, and that had advanced to a state of eminence under their particular inspection. See Acts xviii. 19—21; and xix; and xx. 16—38, and Epistle to the Ephesians. Favoured as this church had been, it became necessary, about forty years after its establishment, to address its minister and its members in the language which you have heard.

Falling from God has ever been man's prevalent fault;—in almost every part of the Sacred Volume we find cautions, admonitions, or threatenings respecting it;—our text refers to this evil,—it is an address to the *fallen*; and from it we are led—*To consider their fall, and the means by which they may rise again.*

I. **THEIR FALL.** The word *fall* is striking; it is that which is so frequently used to express man's first departure from God. In the text it is synonymous with the various expressions used by the sacred writers, to signify declension from God and his ways. Our departure from God may, in its nature and in its degree, be different. Let us therefore rather take a general view of the subject, than confine our ideas to the particular fault charged on this church (in verse 4;) and rather connect our ideas with individuals, than refer them to whole communities; not forgetting that what describes the state of a fallen individual, may illustrate the condition of a fallen church.

It is a fall—from the *farour and the approbation of God*;—where the soul lived under the smiles of the divine countenance; into a state of guilt and condemnation. Compare Psalms xxvii. and li.

From the image of God;—where knowledge, righteousness, and holiness adorned the mind, and rendered it peaceful and happy, into a state of inward depravity; where evil principles, unholy passions, sinful dispositions, and bad tempers, again darken, disturb, and torment the soul.

From the love of God;—where the best, the strongest affections of the soul, were turned toward, and fixed on, the greatest and best of Beings; into a state, where all these are drawn towards, and fixed on, the degraded creature, and the perishing world.

From a state of vigour, and of holy zeal in the cause of God;—where faith was active, love was warm, prayer and praise

were fervent, and where efforts to do good were strong and constant; into a state of religious supineness; where the soul is no longer vigorous towards God; and where forms, sounds, and cold wishes, are substituted for prayer, praise, and holy zeal.

It is *frequently* a fall *from rectitude of heart and life*, into the practice of immorality.

From having enjoyed the approbation, the respect, the love of the church, such persons become, to the people of God, mere objects of commiseration.

Oh, what a fall! They *were ascending* toward heaven; but see! they now descend towards hell!

Such a sight may gratify fiends. Bad men may say—"So would we have it." But over such the pious mourn; and the gracious, the merciful God speaks to such in the language of paternal compassion, Hos. xi. 8; and in our text, Jesus, who would raise them again, addresses them thus, "Remember," &c.

Fallen as they are, they need not perish. Oh, that they may take heed to the things which they hear! and from the following part of the subject, may they understand, and by the grace of God, use,

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH THEY MAY RISE AGAIN.

"*Remember—from whence thou art fallen.*" Strange as it may be, the fallen do forget, or seem to forget, their former situation. Sin dreadfully deceives and hardens. See 2 Sam. xii. 1—7; Heb. iii. 7—14; Rev. iii. 17. But it is essential to the rise of any fallen professor, that he remember *from whence* he hath fallen: without this he can have no proper view of the nature and the extent of his fall.

Remember,—poor, fallen soul!—thou *once* wast a child of God, and couldst call God *thy* father. Thou *didst* live in a state of favour, of union, and of intimacy with thy God and Saviour. Thou *wast* humble, patient, meek, happy, loving, and beloved. Thy soul *did* aspire heavenward; and standing as on an eminence, thou couldst *look down* on created good, as perishable, trifling, diminutive, and mean; and turning thine eyes upward, by faith thou couldst almost behold the glory of heaven; while holy meditation, and spiritual desire, really carried thee beyond the present life. Or, suppose that thou *didst* not rise quite so high;—hast thou not left *so much* of what was

great and good, that thy soul is filled with sorrow and regret for that which thou hast lost? Dost thou not say, "Oh! that it were with me as in days that are past!" We rejoice that thou art made thus sensible of thy present circumstances.—*Now*, take the following advice:

Repent—of thy fall. Falling is in itself a great sin, Jer. ii. 19. *Repent*, on account of the injury that thy fall hath done to thyself, to the people of God, to the cause of God. Repent *sincerely* and *deeply*. Read the 51st Psalm, and understand what deep and sincere repentance is. Many returning backsliders seem not to be affected, as they should be, on account of their fall. When fallen, there is no rising again without repentance.

"Do thy first works." Leave off thy sins; break from thy sinful associates. Have recourse to prayer, especially to private prayer. Use diligently the means of grace. Above all, go to Christ, the only Saviour, as thou didst first go. Cry mightily for salvation. Believe, *again* believe on the Son of God. *Renew thy former zeal.*

Oh! how difficult it is to acknowledge the depth of one's fall;—to begin anew! How many never effectually rise again, because they *will* be viewed as though they had never fallen!

The above advice is urged by the following awful threat:—

"Or else I will come." Such an intimation is always very weighty. See Luke xx. 16; Rev. xxii. 12.

"I will come—quickly." Though the Lord Jesus is long-suffering, having given time for repentance, and that time being nearly expired, he will *quickly* come. See ver. 21, 22. Isa. i. 5; Prov. xxix. 1.

"I will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." See chap. i. 12, 20, and ver. 1. I will withdraw Divine light, Divine influence, and leave the fallen church in its degraded state; so that a lifeless ministry, and lifeless forms, shall be followed by darkness, and by death. See Isa. v. 5, 6. A threat long since executed on the Ephesian church;—a threat that will ere long be put in force against thee, poor fallen professor, "except thou repent." *O that thou mayest awake, and call upon God, that thou perish not!*

What a lesson is our text for fallen professors, and for fallen churches!

But who are so backward to learn, as those that are thus fallen? The reason is obvious. See chap. iii. 17.

Yet *the fallen* are the most pitiable objects of commiseration in the world.

GAMMA.

L. THE GLORIOUS DAY OF ETERNITY.

REV. xxii. 5.

"And there shall be no night there."

IN the history of the memorable retreat of the ten thousand Greeks under Xenophon, it is said, that after travelling upwards of two thousand three hundred miles through the midst of their enemies, they at length ascended a mountain whence they could see the Euxine Sea, on the shores of which were several Greek cities. In raptures of joy they instantly shouted out, "The sea, the sea!" The sound was echoed, and re-echoed, till the heavens resounded with their acclamations. Similar feelings, but far more sublime, animate the hearts of Christians passing through the hostile world, when from the summit of contemplation and faith they discover the vast ocean of eternal felicity, in which they will shortly be absorbed for ever. Such feelings we would fain excite in your bosoms at present. Look forward therefore to that city and palace of your glorious King, of which the magnificent description concludes in these emphatic words, "There shall be no night there, for the Lord God giveth them light," &c.

Night, or darkness, is the proper emblem of evil, and if this be removed by the Lord God, who is the everlasting light of his saints, in him they will enjoy all possible good for ever. There will therefore be in the heavenly state,

I. NO LITERAL NIGHT OF NATURAL DARKNESS.

In the present world all animals require, at stated periods, the refreshment of sleep. Hence the gracious appointment of

night, that under her sable shadow thoughtful man and weary beast might find repose, and the earth be refreshed by gentle and fertilizing dews.

But although these and other benevolent purposes are attained by the regular return of night, it is certainly a proof of the inferiority of the present state. Darkness wears an aspect of gloom and horror. It interrupts in a great degree the operations of mind and body. It affords the adulterer, the robber, the murderer, &c., opportunity to perpetrate their nefarious deeds. It exposes to imminent dangers from accidents, fire, &c. Sleep is the image of *death*; darkness the picture of the *grave*. In heaven there shall be no night; no vicissitude or change, but one perpetual, glorious, everlasting day. There the bodies as well as the souls of the saints, being spiritual and freed from every corruptible quality, will require neither rest nor sleep. "The Lord God is their light. They depend no more on a luminary which leaves them to enlighten another hemisphere. They no longer dwell in a land of horrors and dangers; but are for ever illuminated by the glory of God and of the Lamb, Isa. lx. 19, 20; Rev. xxi. 23.

II. NO MENTAL NIGHT OF ERROR AND IGNORANCE.

Darkness is a common and very natural emblem of ignorance and delusion, Isa. lx. 2; Eph. iv. 18; Col. i. 13.

A thick gloom is indeed spread over the minds of men in the present world. Regard the *unregenerate*. How dark are they in spiritual matters! How gross and confused are their ideas—of God—of themselves—of moral obligation—of the rule of duty—of the plan of salvation—and of their final state! How does error succeed error, and one delusion follow another, as vapour chases vapour, and wave impels wave! Regard the *pious*. They enjoy the light of truth, but it is obscured by many dense and heavy clouds. Witness,

The varieties of sentiment which prevail among them—their scanty knowledge of the works of God—their incapacity to comprehend the dispensations of his providence—their imperfect conceptions even of divine grace, of the Redeemer's glory, and the extent of their privileges, 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

This state of imperfect knowledge is doubtless the effect of sin, and is permitted to remain, 1. To accord with a state of

probation. 2. To afford us opportunity to exercise faith. 3. To excite us to aspire after a higher state.

But in heaven there shall be no mental night. Our contracted notions shall give place to just and expanded views of the works, providence, and grace of God. There ignorance and error shall be abolished. "We shall know as we also are known."

1. The *causes of our ignorance* shall exist no more.

2. Our *faculties* shall be perfected.

3. Our *means of information* shall be proportioned to our powers. God himself shall be our teacher. Saints and angels, and perhaps innumerable intelligences from different regions of the universe, shall be our companions for ever.

III. NO MORAL NIGHT OF SIN.

In this sense the world is enveloped in the most palpable shades. Sin has spread her dismal wings over all parts of the globe; and, oh, what a black night of injustice, and fraud, and rapine, of cruelty, oppression, and murder, and of all sorts of moral evil, casts its detestable gloom over mankind!

It is true the *pious* are freed from the dominion of sin; but still they suffer much—either from *the remains of the carnal mind* previous to its final extirpation, or from the *examples of sinners*, or from *the danger of relapsing*, through the temptation of the world, the flesh, and the devil. But in heaven the saints are free,

1. *From all moral pollution in themselves.* The blood of Christ had cleansed them from all sin before they left the world, and now they enjoy the full perfection of holiness.

2. *From the examples of sinners.* The unholy shall never enter there. Rev. xxi. 27.

3. *From the possibility of sinning*—for all temptations are for ever excluded. Their probation is terminated. They can have no trial, of consequence, no danger. Oh, glorious and eternal day of holiness!

IV. NO PENAL NIGHT OF SORROW AND AFFLICTION.

"Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;" but in the heavenly state there will be,

1. *No bodily afflictions*—no languishing or aching head—throbbing, palpitating heart—no trembling nerves, &c. There all shall enjoy health and vigour, immortal youth, and unfading beauty, Isa. xxxiii. 24.

2. *No circumstantial afflictions*—no poverty, losses, or disappointments—no cares, labour, &c. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more,” &c. Rev. vii. 16, 17.

3. *No family afflictions*. The misconduct of our relatives and friends—their misfortunes and sorrows—the bereavements of death, &c. shall rend our hearts no more—they shall have no place in heaven.

4. Finally, *No afflictions produced by spiritual causes*. We shall no longer suffer from the wickedness or persecution of sinners. No more deplore our own defects—the lukewarmness of professors—the falls of backsliders, or the little success of the gospel.

But instead of a sorrowful night shall be a blessed and endless day of peace and joy—of rapture and ecstasy—of triumph and exultation, Rev. xxii. 4.

Let us improve the subject,

1. By *inquiry*. Who shall ascend the hill of Zion? who shall dwell in the tabernacle of God? Answer from Rev. xxi. 7, 8, 27, chap. xxii. 14, 15. Every one may attain the character there described, ver. 17.

2. By *censure*—on the amazing stupidity of those who will not make the sacrifices, and perform the duties requisite to obtain an inheritance among the saints in light.

3. By *encouragement*—to those who travel toward the city of God.

DELTA.

LI. NOAH'S OBEDIENCE.

GEN. vi. 22.

“Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.”

BIOGRAPHICAL researches are peculiarly interesting. They teach us to form a proper estimate of mankind, and the various features in the human character; they convey correct ideas of the

strong and capacious powers of the soul, and are eminently calculated to inspire us with a noble ambition to follow the most worthy and renowned of our species. There are some men, however, whose characters excite a more than common interest in our minds, especially those who have lived in a remarkable era of the world,—who have accomplished some mighty achievement,—and whose designs have met with the peculiar sanction of Heaven : such was the subject of our text, Noah ;—a man who witnessed the most desolating scourge which ever visited the world,—who brought to perfection one of the most stupendous pieces of mechanism that was ever reared by human hands,—and whose life was preserved as a reward for his obedience.

The text contains a high commendation of his character. “ Thus did Noah,” &c. We will consider,

1. THE RULE OF NOAH’S OBEDIENCE. “ All that God commanded.” Mankind need a rule for their conduct. This rule should possess the following characteristics :—

1. *It should come forth from God, and have the Divine sanction.* No man can be a rule to himself; as he did not produce himself, is not dependent on himself, nor solely accountable to himself. No man can be an absolute rule for another; for all men are defectible, and subject to mutation: but a rule for human manners and conduct should be perfect and immutable. The commandments found in the Bible are God’s commandments. The men who wrote them received them from God; some orally, some by inspiration; “ God said to Noah;” verse 13. The prophets prefaced their messages, by declaring, “ Thus saith the Lord.”

2. *It should be practicable in its requirements.* A rule whose demands are impossible to be observed, is a contradiction. God’s commandments are all practicable. He is not a hard Master; “ His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.” “ His commandments are not grievous.” But we must not judge of their practicability by the infirmities of our flesh; or the weakness of our reason; but by the power of God,—the energies of grace,—and the attainments of the saints. God charged Noah to build the ark; had human reason been consulted he would never have made the attempt.

1. *It should be plain and circumstantial in its phraseology.* No man can act according to a rule which he does not under-

stand. God's commandments are easily comprehended. The Bible may present mysterious things, and things inexplicable; but there is no precept mysterious, no commandment abstruse. Read the charge to Noah in the preceding verses; examine the commandments of God generally; plainness and perspicuity are their uniform characteristics.

4. *It should be beneficial in its results.* Human nature revolts at the idea of living by a rule which does not bear upon our personal interest. God never has laid, nor ever will lay, an injunction upon a human being which militates against his own happiness. God's commandments are the emanations of his love, and the welfare of mankind is their ultimate object; the precepts given to Noah serve to illustrate this. See Psalm xix. 11.; Rev. xxii. 14.

II. THE NATURE OF NOAH'S OBEDIENCE. "According to all that God commanded him, so did he."

1. *Noah's obedience was pious in its principle.* Actions are the result of principles. The tree must be made good, before the fruit can be good. To suppose that a man will obey God, whose heart is not right before him, is a palpable absurdity. "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God." Oh, how vain are all attempts to obey God without loving him!

2. *Noah's obedience was prompt and decided in its acts.* No sooner does the inspired writer close the account of the Divine admonition to Noah, than he immediately adds, "Thus did Noah," Heb. xi. 7. It is said, he was "moved by fear;" and fear is always prompt in its acts. There is too commonly a culpable reluctance in our obedience, especially when the cross lies in the way: but, like David, we should make haste, and delay not to keep God's commandments. Psalm cxix. 60.

3. *Noah's obedience was laborious in its exercise.* To build an ark, not less than 512 feet long, eighty-seven wide, and fifty-two high, and the internal capacity of which, according to Calmet, was 357,600 cubical cubits, was a prodigious undertaking, and required immense labour; the labour of the head to contrive, and the hands to accomplish. And does not our obedience to God require labour? Read Matt. xi. 12.; John vi.

27; Heb. iv. 11. Is there no labour required in making the sacrifices which God demands; in exercising the graces which he approves; and in performing the duties that he requires? Here must be the exercise of the understanding to know the commandments of God; of the will, to submit to their authority; and of the faculties of the mind and members of the body, to practise them.

4. *Noah's obedience was universal in its extent.* He did "according to *all* that God commanded him." A failure of the most trivial kind would have defeated his whole design, and endangered his own life, and the lives of all who were with him in the ark. His obedience was therefore exact, and he was attentive to do *all* that God commanded him. Oh, what a pattern for us to follow! Our obedience should be as broad as the commandment, James ii. 10.

5. *Noah's obedience was persevering in its course.* Impediments were most certainly thrown in his way. Were there no doubts that assailed his mind as to the possibility of the scheme? Were there no insults heaped upon him? Were there no temptations to relinquish the undertaking, during the long period of an hundred and twenty years? But Noah not only began, and continued, but finished his undertaking. We also shall have obstacles to meet with in the course of our obedience: but we must persevere, hold on, and finish our course with joy. Matt. xxiv. 13.

6. *Noah's obedience was successful in its object.* The end crowned the action. His life was preserved as the reward of his toils and labours, and persevering efforts. See him shut up in the ark, secure in divine protection, a world of water around him, millions of dead floating on its surface, the dwellings of men for ever demolished, and nature all in ruins.

Learn from the subject,

1. What terrible desolations sin makes in the world, and how the severity of God was displayed in making the very elements conspire to the destruction of those who had slighted the divine counsels.

2. How tenderly God cares for his servants, and how easily he can provide means for their safety.

3. How much human security depends upon human exertion.

The way of duty is the way of safety. Had Noah dared to disobey God, he would have perished in the flood.—“Blessed are they that do his commandments.”

BETA.

LII. THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THE GATE OF HEAVEN.

GEN. xxviii. 17.

“How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

1. AMONG the numerous evidences of God’s good-will towards the human race, we may justly include his gracious disposition to maintain communion with us; he rejoices in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights are with the sons of men. Being thus mindful of us, and inclined to visit us, he calls us by various means to seek communion with him. For this purpose, he speaks to us by his works of creation and providence; by his word, by his spirit, by his servants; and even sometimes in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, then he openeth their ears, and sealeth their instruction :—

‘For human weal Heaven husbands all events :
Dull sleep instructs, nor sport vain dreams in vain.’

2. An instance of this we find connected with our text, verse 12—15; “And he dreamed, and behold a ladder,” &c. In this event, we perceive the extensive utility of godliness; that it is indeed profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, I Tim. iv. 8. It supplies its subjects with the best company in solitude.—It affords them strong consolation in the most destitute circumstances.—It assures them, that while they remain in this world, they have an interest in the guardian care of angels, and the

providence of God ; and that when they leave this world, a way stands open for their removal from earth to heaven. On Jacob being thus instructed and comforted, he awoke and exclaimed, " Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not !—How dreadful is this place ! " &c. In improving the words of our text, let us consider the place here specified,—the names given to it,—and the reflection suggested by it.

I. THE PLACE HERE SPECIFIED. The place where God's presence had been peculiarly manifested. This place resembles all those places which are exclusively dedicated to God's service, and where he is acceptably worshipped.

1. *It was a place distinguished by favourable circumstances.* A place detached from all secular pursuits : attended by a sincere worshipper of God, and suitable for the exercise of devotion. Such are also those places now consecrated to God's service. In all these places, therefore, God's presence and blessing may be confidently expected. Exod. xx. 24.

2. *It was a place of sacred instruction ;* where the most interesting truths were clearly taught. Here Jacob was instructed, both by what God exhibited to his view, and by what he said to him in this important dream.

He was instructed by what God exhibited to his view. The ladder which he beheld was certainly emblematical ; it represented the mediation of Christ,—the providence of God,—and the ministry of angels. It represented *the mediation of Christ*, that promised seed of Jacob, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, verse 14. Here we behold the constitution of our Redeemer's person. By his incarnation, he was set on the earth ; in his Divine nature he reached to heaven. The Son of man, who came down from heaven, was at the same time in heaven, John iii. 13. In his person, we see God and man, heaven and earth united, John i. 1—14 ; 1 Tim. iii. 16. Here we behold the blessed effects of his mediatorial interposition. By him an intercourse is opened between God and mankind : through Christ, we come to God for salvation, 1 Pet. iii. 18. ; John xiv. 6 ;—and through him, God comes to us with salvation, 2 Cor. v. 19 ; Isa. xxxv. 3, 4. This ladder represented *the providence of God*. For, as it was set on the earth, as the top of it reached to heaven, and God stood above it ; so his providence governs universal nature ; the highest angels are depen-

dent on his care, and the meanest mortals are not excluded from it, Ps. cxiii. 5, 6. "Who is like," &c. This ladder also represented *the ministry of angels*. It represented them as descending to attend us as ministering spirits, Ps. xci. 11, 12; Heb. i. 14; and ascending, perhaps, to give an account of their missions; and most certainly, for the purpose of conveying the spirits of departed saints to the paradise of God. Luke xvi. 22.

Jacob was also instructed by what God said to him, verse 13. Thus he was assured, that those who lived to God on earth, now lived with God in heaven. For God now declares, "I *am* the God of Abraham thy father;" compare Luke xx. 37, 38. These truths are still taught in every place where the worship of God in Christ is established. See 1 Tim. i. 15; 1 Pet. v. 7; Ps. xxxiv. 7; Rev. xiv. 13.

3 *This was a place of covenant engagement between God and man*. Here God engaged to be Jacob's God; and Jacob engaged to be God's worshipper, verse 20—22. Imitate Jacob; choose God for your God, Deut. xxx. 19, 20; Ps. lxiii. 1. Duly worship him as such, Ps. xcv. 6, 7; and sacrifice to him as such, Rom. xii. 1; Heb. xiii. 15, 16. Then God's promise to Jacob shall be fulfilled in you, verse 13—15. God will bless you; make you a blessing; be with you; keep you; and never forsake you; Isaiah xlii. 16. Having noticed the place he specified, let us consider,

II. THE NAMES GIVEN TO IT. "This is none other but the house of God," &c.

1. *This is none other but the house of God*. Here, observe, *It is the house of God*. Such is every place where God is acceptably worshipped. This is evident from various undoubted facts. In every such place *God's family are associated in one community*. Here the household of God are fed with the bread of heaven. The babes with milk, 1 Peter ii. 2. The young men and fathers with stronger food, Heb. v. 13, 14. Here God's stewards distribute the heavenly provisions, 1 Cor. iv. 1; Luke xii. 42, 43. Here God's upper servants, the angels, wait on their fellow-servants, 1 Cor. xi. 10; Luke xv. 10. In every such place *God is actually present*, Matt. xviii. 20; Psalm cxxxiii. 13, 14. In every such place *God's favours are obtained by devout seekers*, Luke xi. 9, 10. It is none other but

the house of God. It is not the house of *amusement*; to seek mere entertainment in it basely degrades it, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. Not the house of *merchandise*; to attend it with worldly minds profanes it, Luke xix. 45, 46. It is not *Bethaven*, the house of *iniquity*; to attend it with sinful indulgences, must desecrate it, by devoting it to Satan's service, James i. 21.

2. *This is the gate of heaven*: thus it may justly be denominated, because,—here many enter on the way that leads to heaven. This Christ commands, Matt. vii. 13, 14. Enter on it, by repentance, Prov. ix. 6; and by receiving Christ, John i. 12. Here immortal souls are prepared for heaven,—by deliverance from sin,—from its power, guilt, and defilement, Acts xxvi. 18. Seek this, 2 Cor. vii. 1. Here the enjoyments of heaven are anticipated,—by grateful praise, Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 4,—and by communion with God, Ps. xxii. 4; and Ps. lxxxiv. 10, 12. That every house of God may prove the gate of heaven, let us consider,

III. THE REFLECTION SUGGESTED BY IT. “How dreadful is this place!” By the word “dreadful,” is meant awful, or what is calculated to inspire us with solemn reverence. This teaches us, that the worship of God should be attended with habitual seriousness.

1. *With serious consideration.* In his worship, ever consider,—that God is now present with you, to inspect your deportment and hearts, 1 Chron. xxix. 17; and to grant your requests, Heb. xi. 6; that you are accountable to God for the means of grace, Luke xvi. 2; Eccles. xii. 14; and that an ordinance lost may be an irreparable loss: such an opportunity for getting good may never occur again, Eccles. ix. 10. The worship of God should be attended,

2. *With serious watchfulness against all distractions*, 1 Cor. vii. 35.—Watch against the distracting temptations of Satan, Matt. xiii. 19; 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.—Watch against the distracting thoughts of your own hearts, Prov. iv. 23.—Watch against the distracting objects of sense, Ps. cxix. 37. The worship of God should be attended,

3. *With serious concern to obtain present blessings from God.* Seek assurance of your interest in God's mercy, Psalm xc. 14. Seek improvement and establishment in piety, 1 Chron. iv. 10, 11.—Be importunate to obtain those blessings now, Ps.

cxviii, 25 ; Gen. xxxii. 26. The worship of God should be attended,

4. *With serious intercession in behalf of others.* Especially, —for your teachers ; that God may assist and bless them, Acts viii. 15 ; 2 Thess. iii. 1 ;—for your fellow-worshippers, that God may save them, Luke xi. 2 ;—and for the heathen, that God may send them the means of salvation, Psalm lxvii. 1, 2. The worship of God should be attended,

5. *With serious gratitude for favours received,* Psalm c. 4, 5. Has God enlightened your minds,—pardoned your sins,—converted your souls,—and comforted your hearts ? Faithfully prove and examine yourselves, 2 Cor. xiii. 5 ; Gal. vi. 4. If interested in the gospel covenant, then to rejoice in the Lord is both your privilege and duty, Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16 ; 1 Thess. v. 16—18. Of joyful praise to our redeeming Lord, it may be affirmed with great truth, that it “ delights heaven, earth, ourselves : it is duty, glory, peace,” Ps. cxlvii. 1. But while you rejoice in God with feelings of the warmest gratitude, never let your joy degenerate into levity ; serve the Lord with “ fear, and rejoice with trembling,” Ps. ii. 11 ; for “ God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him,” Ps. lxxxix. 7. “ Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.” Heb. xii. 28.

ALPHA.

LIII. THE SABBATH.

EXODUS xx. 8.

“ Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.”

EVERY command of God is as reasonable as it is divine : and is enjoined no less from regard to human happiness, than to secure the glory of the great Lawgiver. Those generally termed

the Ten Commandments stand prominently conspicuous in the sacred volume; and from the manner in which they were announced, the frequency with which they are introduced, and their essential connexion with all good conduct, they present the strongest claims on our attention. You are aware that our text forms a part of this sacred code; that it stands among these commandments, and is found in a part of the divine records which gives an account of God's delivering, in form, his law to mortals; and that it has all the sanction which accompanies the mandates of Heaven.

The institution of the Sabbath-day, and the manner in which we should regard it, are the topics which our text embraces, and those which now demand our serious attention.

I. THE INSTITUTION OF THE SABBATH.

1. By the Sabbath, we understand a day rendered sacred, on account of Divine appointment, and comprising successively, a seventh portion of our time.

2. The institution of such a day is not only divine; but, in order of time, it is prior to all other institutions which have a moral bearing on human conduct. Indeed, we trace its origin to the highest possible date, for the first seventh day was a Sabbath; blessed, sanctified, and kept: see Gen. ii. 2, 3.

3. No farther mention is made of the Sabbath-day, until Exodus xvi. 23; where it is referred to in such a manner, as shows, that Moses, at least, was well acquainted with its sacred character. Renewed sanction was given to this ordinance, when, as in the account before us, it was announced among, and made one of the ten words, or commandments, delivered with such awful authority as the context records. It is observable, however, that this command, in its introduction, is referred to as a thing well known; so much the word "remember" naturally suggests.

4. Admitting that there were peculiarities connected with the observance of this day among the Jews, and that some other days were termed Sabbaths in the Jewish ritual; suppose that some superstitious pretences respecting this day, when our Saviour was upon earth, were exploded by him; (see Matt. xii. 1; Luke vi. 1. and xiii. 10; and John v. 9;) and that He who is the Lord of the Sabbath changed the day from the seventh to the first; the day on which he arose from the dead; (see John

xx. 1; Matt. xxviii. 1; Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10;) will any, or all of such circumstances, bear us out in the disregard of an institution, so sacredly enjoined by God, and so importantly useful to man? As well might we reject the precepts of justice, because the Author of our mild dispensation substituted "Resist not evil," in the place of "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;" or leave off Divine worship, because an apostle said, "Let no man judge you, in respect of an holy day or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath-days;" and abandon all Christian ordinances, because the weak or the wicked blend superstition with observance, and are reprov'd by Heaven for such conduct.

5. The manner in which a violation of this day was punished, Numb. xv. 32—36;—the reproofs given to those who treated it with inattention, Neh. xiii. 17, 18; Ezek. xx. 21, xxii. 8, and xxiii. 38;—and the promises made to such as should keep it holy, Isa. lvi. 2, 4, 6, 7, and lviii. 13, 14,—show, that the man who trifles with the sacredness of its appointment exposes himself, in no small degree, to the Divine displeasure. Let me, therefore, have your continued, and most serious attention, while I endeavour to show,

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH WE SHOULD REGARD IT. This is expressed in the text, by the words, "keep it holy;" which must signify,—*that the day should be separated from all common uses; and that it should be dedicated to services of a religious nature.*

1. *The former of these ideas is minutely illustrated in the subsequent part of the commandment;* "In it thou shalt not do any work," &c. From which we learn, that the Sabbath is as much violated by us, if we employ our servants, or cattle, in ordinary purposes on that day, as if we were thus engaged ourselves. It is necessary, however, to observe, that works of real necessity were allowed; and that this is rendered evident,—by the very nature of things;—by the conduct of those who were most strict in their attention to the Sabbath; and by the sanction of the Lord Jesus himself: see Matt. xii. 11; Luke xiii. 15; John vii. 22.

2. *The dedication of the temple to religious services* is next to be considered. That such an idea is contained in the phrase, "keep it holy," appears evident from the following considera-

tions:—As no common occupation was to engage the time or attention of individuals on this day, something religious must, or idleness would be the necessary consequence. *It appears demonstrable, from Leviticus xxiii. 2, 3,* that, on this day, the worship of God was to be publicly celebrated; and that such worship was to engage the attention of the people in their dwelling.—*The usages of the Jews*, as recorded by the evangelists, make it clear, that they did employ the Sabbath for such a purpose; see Luke iv. 16; and xiii. 10; and vi. 3.—And *the conduct of the Apostle* shows, that, under the Christian dispensation, the seventh day, or the first, was regularly occupied in the worship of God: see Acts xiii. 14—42, and 44; and xvi 13; xvii 1, 2; xviii. 4; and xx. 7. *The custom of the church of Christ*, in all ages, might be adduced; but this appears unnecessary, as the most common reference to ecclesiastical history will satisfy any candid inquirer.

3. That works of mercy and of charity, whether they respect the bodies or the souls of men, are suitable exercises for some parts of the sacred day, none, I presume, will question. However, *to keep the Sabbath-day holy*, is not merely to abstain from common concerns, and to give regular attention to the externals of Divine worship, but, amidst all, to *worship God in spirit and in truth*; and to consider the day and the services as peculiarly belonging to God.

Let me exhort you, then, “Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.”

Do not *forget* the sacred day; or merely remember it, to treat it with profanity.

Remember it,—because God commands you to do it;—because it is a most salutary institution;—because the Sabbath is a day highly honoured of God;—because awful judgments have arrested many in the profanation of it; because it is a type of heaven's eternal rest.

GAMMA.

LIV. FOLLOWING THE MULTITUDE PROHIBITED.

Exodus xxiii. 2.

“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.”

WHATEVER was written aforetime was written for our instruction. But the most important parts of Divine revelation, and those with which we ought to be most intimately acquainted, are the precepts; which comprise the whole of a man's duty, and delineate, with critical exactness, a moral map of the road which he has to travel. The precepts of the Bible are of two kinds; those which positively illustrate what we are obliged to do, and those which negatively describe what we are to leave undone. The text is of the latter description, which, though found in the Old Testament, and among the code of laws which God gave to the Jews, is not of less importance to us than it was to them; we will therefore, in endeavouring to profit by it,

I. OFFER A FEW THOUGHTS FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXPLAINING ITS NATURE.

II. URGE REASONS TO INDUCE US TO OBSERVE IT.

III. IMPART ADVICE FOR THE DIRECTION OF THOSE WHO WISH TO ESCAPE THE ENSNARING WILES OF THE MULTITUDE.

In explaining the text, there are two general observations which we have to make. First, something assumed. Secondly, something implied. It is assumed that the multitude do evil: it is implied that we are in danger of copying their example. First, *the multitude do evil*. Evil is either moral, or natural;—sin, or its consequences. The former is to be understood here; this is the most common import of the term, Gen. vi. 5; Isa. i. 16; Rom. xii. 9. That the multitude do evil, may be inferred, 1. *From the review of past ages*. Look at the example of the old world, when all flesh had corrupted its way; at Sodom and Gomorrah, when ten righteous persons could not be found amidst that vast population. God, indeed, in after ages, chose a people for himself, but even in reference to these, Isaiah said, “Except the LORD OF HOSTS had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom.” Isa. i. 9. And if

iniquity abounded among a people so highly distinguished, what could be expected from heathen nations, who were involved in the deepest darkness, and corrupted by the vilest idolatries? 2. *From the cruel persecutions which have been raised against the righteous in various ages of the world.* What these were in ancient times, we learn from Heb. xi. 35—38. But why have the people of God been thus persecuted? Because the multitude do evil. The reason why Cain slew his brother was, his works were evil, and his brother's righteous: and the prevalence of persecution has been a standing evidence of the truth we attempt to establish. 3. *From the common conduct of mankind.* Is not vice more general than virtue? Does not evil abound more than good? Is not the world followed with more avidity than religion? See how plays and amusements are sought after; what oaths are sworn, what lies are told, what thefts are committed, and what abominations are practised!

Secondly, The precept in the text supposes that *we are in danger of copying the example of the multitude.* We may infer this, 1. *From the innate tendencies which we have to evil.* The "imagination of man's heart is evil;" evil has its seat there; and if the fountain be evil, will not the streams be evil? Look at little children, who have not been corrupted by the manners of the multitude, yet what tendencies to evil are evinced, and dispositions to evil displayed in their conduct! 2. *From the prevalence of bad example.* Man is an imitative creature, and easily prevailed upon to imbibe the spirit, and copy the example of those with whom he may associate, and especially, when that example is in unison with his inclinations: hence we are not only disposed to evil, but have facilities to the practice of evil; we are like disordered people in a hospital, surrounded by the dying and the dead, breathing the very atmosphere of disease, putrescence, and death. The practice of the multitude renders vice familiar to our thoughts, and gradually wears off the abhorrence with which we once beheld it. 3. *From a variety of melancholy facts.* The multitude who now do evil, were not always such adepts in depravity; when they first entered into the broad way, their feet were not swift to do evil; they proceeded with hesitating steps, for none become completely wicked on a sudden, but by practice they became hardened in their crimes, and like the wicked whom they follow.

II. URGE REASONS TO INDUCE US TO OBSERVE IT.

The multitude doing evil are represented as guides, which men are accustomed to follow; but the reasons why we should not imitate them, are, 1. *They are unlawful and unconstituted guides.* The text itself sufficiently proves this. "Thou shalt not follow," &c. This is God's positive injunction to *thee*; it is personal and absolute; and wilt thou not revere his authority? God's will is law, and should be regarded as an invariable rule of action; and to "follow a multitude," &c., is to act in direct opposition to God.

2. *They are bad guides.* The principles by which they are actuated are vile, vicious, and ungodly principles: pride, anger, malice, revenge, and all the bad passions that infest the mind; the practices they pursue are bad practices; the way they travel is a bad way. By following "a multitude to do evil," you will become like them, and by yielding to the current of vice, you render that current stronger, for carrying forward others to ruin.

3. *They are dishonourable guides.* For the credit of your characters, you ought not to follow "a multitude," &c. In all ages, the most honourable men have been those who have dared to be singular, and stood aloof from the degenerate crowd, unterrified by their frowns, and untempted by their smiles. Follow a multitude to do evil, and you will dishonour your character, stain your reputation, and involve yourselves in eternal disgrace.

4. *They are unprofitable guides.* "What fruit had you in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" Evil is a most unprofitable concern, Isaiah xlviii. 22. We seldom embark in any enterprise without an eye to profit, but here you may calculate with moral certainty upon the loss of all that is valuable and profitable, for time and eternity.

5. *They are dangerous guides.* We all believe that there is a dreadful hell, a place and state of insufferable pain and punishment; and every evil doer is preparing himself for that punishment; treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; his steps are taking hold on hell, and he is going down to the chambers of death. By following a multitude to do evil, you endanger your souls, and accelerate your ruin.

III. IMPART ADVICE FOR THE DIRECTION OF THOSE WHO WISH TO ESCAPE THE ENSNARING WILES OF THE MULTITUDE.

1. *Get your minds deeply and thoroughly impressed with the awfulness of your situation.* Dangers unseen will be unavoidable. Consider your ways; reflect on your past conduct; converse with your own hearts; thoughtlessness is one of the greatest evils in existence, and nothing is more common. Without consideration, you will be irresistibly captivated to do evil.

2. *Seek the regenerating grace of God.* Our carnal natures are wholly inclined to evil; "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh."—Oh! pray for the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost. The Ethiopian may as easily attempt to change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as you cease from doing evil without a change of heart.

3. *Be on your guard against the seductive wiles and insinuating influence of the multitude.* Sinners will entice you; but come out from among them; have no communion with the unfruitful works of darkness. Psalm i. 1.

4. *Follow the happy few who strive to do good.* The church and the world form two societies, acting in direct opposition to each other; in one of these societies you *must* be; there is no standing neuter. On one side, lie your allegiance, your honour, and your interest; on the other your guilt, your shame, and your punishment. Can you hesitate for a moment where to take your stand? He that is not with Christ is against him. Show that you are with Christ by being with his people. Oh, say, "This people shall be my people, and their God my God." Infer,

1. That the measures of right and wrong are not to be determined by the majority. Good and evil are fixed immutable principles; and their natures are unchangeable, whether many or few follow them.

2. What gratitude is due to God for the revelation of his will, which marks the boundaries of right and wrong; and for the gift of his Son to redeem us from this present evil world: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

BETA.

LV. CALEB'S CHARACTER.

NUMBERS xiv. 24.

"But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

THE period of the history of the Jews comprehended in this book, is peculiarly eventful and instructive. It contains a distinct account of their travels, rebellions, punishments, and deliverances in the wilderness, for nearly forty years. Being liberated from Egyptian bondage, and now journeying to the land which the Lord promised to their fathers; they desired that certain faithful men should be sent to search the country, and discover the character of its inhabitants, and the best method of obtaining its possession. Moses, therefore, by the command of God, sent twelve chosen men; among whom were Joshua and Caleb, two eminent saints, and honourable rulers in Israel. When these spies had accomplished their purpose, ten of them brought an evil report of the land, and desired the people to make a captain, and return into Egypt. This *greatly displeased* the Lord, and caused him to "swear in his wrath" that that generation should not enter into the promised rest. But Joshua and Caleb brought a faithful report, and encouraged their brethren immediately to go up and possess the good land. And in the text, the Lord commends the conduct of Caleb, and promises to reward his faithfulness in the cause of truth. "But my servant Caleb," &c. These words exhibit,

I. THE DIGNITY OF CALEB'S CHARACTER. "But *my servant* Caleb." This Divine recognition is highly interesting and comprehensive. It clearly unfolds the characteristic obedience, and stamps immortal renown on the memory of this venerable saint. He was a sincere worshipper and follower of the God of Israel, who *justly demands* the services of his creatures, and *distinctly recognizes* his faithful servants.

1. *The Lord justly demands our services.* There are many who impiously say in their hearts, "What is the Almighty, that

we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?"—Though we cannot be profitable to God, whose perfections are infinite and immutable, yet as his *dependent creatures*, he requires our universal conformity to his will, and obedience to his word. We are under innumerable obligations to him, as our Creator,—Benefactor,—Redeemer,—Saviour,—Judge, &c. He is the greatest and best of beings; the source of all good, and the donor of every blessing. He therefore justly claims us for his rightful property; and it is both our reasonable and indispensable duty to serve him "in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." Prov. xxiii. 26.; Matt. iii. 10; Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

2. *The Lord distinctly recognizes his servants.* He was perfectly acquainted with the *name, person, and character* of Caleb. His knowledge is *infinite*; and he searcheth the hearts and ways of mankind, Jer. xvii. 10. We may deceive ourselves and others; but we cannot deceive him, to whom "all things are naked and open." He infallibly discriminates between the righteous and the wicked, and fully comprehends the comparative defects and excellencies of every character, Prov. v. 21. xv. 3. He knows the profane sinner,—the formal hypocrite,—and the faithful believer. He takes special knowledge of the various circumstances, temptations, motives, devotions, uprightness, and zeal of his beloved people, Psalm xxxiv. 15; 1 Pet. iii. 12. Thus the Lord *recognized* and *honoured* his celebrated servant, whose dignified character is recorded in the text, to be preserved "in everlasting remembrance." Let us then consider,

II. THE COMMENDATION OF CALEB'S PIETY. "Because he had another spirit," &c. This eulogy was pronounced by an *infallible judge*. The omniscient Jehovah beheld his upright follower with special approbation, and highly applauded the *spirit* which he manifested, and the *integrity* which he maintained. Observe,

1. *The commendation of Caleb's excellent spirit.* "Because he had *another spirit* with him." The rebellious spies had an *unbelieving* and *cowardly spirit*. They believed not the promises nor obeyed the precepts of the Lord, Numb. xiii. 31—33. But Caleb had *another* and a very *different spirit*; for the spirit of the God of Israel was with him. He had a *believing spirit*. He fully credited the divine promises, and

implicitly confided in his power and goodness, ver. 9. He was "strong in faith, giving glory to God." He also had a *courageous spirit*. He feared neither the difficulties of the wilderness, nor the opposition of enemies. By his fearless intrepidity, he surmounted every danger, and triumphed over every discouragement, Numb. xiii. 30.; Joshua xiv. 6—11. A *similar spirit* actuates and distinguishes every true Christian. 2 Tim. i. 7.

2. *The commendation of Caleb's faithful conduct.* "He hath followed me *fully*." He did not follow his unbelieving companions in their unfaithfulness, nor imitate his brethren in general in their idolatry and disobedience. He followed the Lord his God. His *will* was the uniform *object* of his desire, and his *word* the only *rule* of his conduct. Religion is still the same.—Christians are "followers of God, as dear children;" and they "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."—Caleb followed the Lord *fully* or *wholly*. This comprehends decision of character,—unreserved obedience,—undaunted fortitude,—universal faithfulness,—and unwearied perseverance. How exalted is the character of this primitive follower of God! He was no *formal* and *wavering* saint, nor *time-server* in religion. He was *decidedly*, *universally*, and *eminently* pious and faithful. His example is recorded for our instruction, and is worthy of our constant regard and imitation. Such following the Lord is absolutely necessary to our present salvation, and final happiness, Matt. xvi. 24; Titus ii. 12; Luke xvii. 28—30. This will lead us to notice,

III. THE RECOMPENCE OF CALEB'S FIDELITY. "Him will I bring into the land," &c. This gracious promise may be considered as *partially* applicable to the people of God in all ages; and suggests two important truths by way of *direction* and *encouragement*.

1. *God highly approves of fidelity and decision.* His *approbation* of Caleb's character and faithfulness is fully expressed in the text, but the conduct of the disobedient Jews provoked him to anger, verse 22, 23. He abhors *hypocrisy* and *lukewarmness*; and those who follow him *unfaithfully* are objects of his *righteous displeasure*, Rev. iii. 15, 16. But such as follow him *fully*, or with *all their hearts*, he regards with *peculiar favour*. He accepts of them as his devoted servants and followers; and he is to them *a God*, and they are to him *a people*. He beholds their holy courage and fidelity with delight,

and grants them the special tokens of his regard. Thus he approved of Enoch, Heb. xi. 5.—Noah, Gen. vi. 8, 9.—Abraham, Gen. xxii. 12, and xviii. 19.—Moses, Heb. xi. 23, 27.—The three Hebrew children, and Daniel in Babylon, Dan. iii. 16—30, and vi. 10, &c. Nothing is so important as the *Divine approbation*. His *favour* is *life*; his *frown* is *death*. The characters he approves are greatly honoured and blessed; and in due time,

2. *He will fully reward his approved followers.* The rebellious Jews were disinherited, and fell in the wilderness; but Caleb, who followed the Lord *fully*, was brought into the goodly land; and his seed possessed their respective lot according to the Divine promise, Josh. xiv. 12, 15. It is certain that no man serves “God for nought,” for “in keeping his commandments there is great reward.” There is a *present reward*, both of temporal benefits and spiritual enjoyments, Psalm xxxiv. 9, 10; Matt. vi. 33; Eph. i. 3; Psalm lxxxiv. 11.—There is also a *future reward* of eternal bliss. Canaan was a *type of Heaven*, which is the promised rest that remains to the people of God. This reward is not of *debt*, but of *sovereign grace*, Eph. ii. 8, 9; Rev. i. 5, 6. Whose servants then are we? Let us not deceive ourselves, Rom. vi. 16. The example of Caleb is truly *encouraging*; it fully proves, that the service of God is both *really honourable* and *universally profitable*; “having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

ETA.

LVI. JOSHUA'S RESOLUTION.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

“But as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”

IN this chapter we find Joshua, just before his death, strongly urging the Israelites to serve the Lord, and him only. This he does,

1. *By the consideration of God's goodness towards them.* In delivering them from their Egyptian oppressors.—In subduing their various enemies before them.—And in giving them a most desirable inheritance.

2. *By an exhortation to renounce all false and vain go* — As the gods of Chaldea, from which Jehovah called their ancestors.—The gods of Egypt, which could not protect their worshippers from those plagues with which the Lord so justly punished them.—And the gods of Canaan, which could not preserve their worshippers from destruction, when the Lord doomed them to it. Hence it was evidently both the duty and interest of the Israelites to serve the Lord only; as he alone can deliver, bless, and keep those who confide in him. Joshua also urges this,

3. *By his own example*, as expressed in our text; “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” In these words we find an excellent resolution; and may be instructed, by considering the resolution itself,—with the propriety and importance of it.

1. **THE RESOLUTION ITSELF.** To serve the Lord, with his family. Here we may observe,

1. *The chosen object of Joshua's worship and service*;—the Lord. The *Lord*, who is the Author of our existence, Psalm xcv. 6, 7; Acts xvii. 28,—the Redeemer of our souls, Psalm cxvi. 8, 9,—the Preserver of our lives, Isaiah i. 2; Psalm lxvi. 8, 9; Job x. 12,—and the Giver of all our enjoyments, 1 Tim. vi. 17; James i. 17.

2. *What Joshua resolved to render,—service.* “We will *serve* the Lord.”—God expects and requires our service. He cannot be imposed on, and will not be pleased with mere pretensions to piety. Not with idle desires, Prov. xxi. 25,—nor with an inconsistent profession, Titus i. 16,—nor with faithless promises, Psalm lxxviii. 36, 37; Gal. vi. 7. He requires service, including faith in Christ, John vi. 28, 29,—the supreme love of himself, Matt. xxii. 37, 38,—love to all mankind, Matt. xxii. 39,—and actual conformity to his will. Matt. vii. 21.

3. *In whose behalf Joshua formed this resolution.* In his own behalf, and that of his house; I, and my house, &c.—He resolves *in his own* behalf; I will serve the Lord. Thus he resolves, and thus we should resolve, because no actions, however

specious, will be accepted instead of personal piety, 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3; Matt. vii. 22, 23.—He resolves *in behalf of his house*; meaning his household, or family. This teaches us that next to the salvation of our own souls we should be concerned for the salvation of all who belong to our respective families: these include our *partners* in matrimonial life; our *children*, whether by birth, by adoption, or by pupilage; our *servants*, whether conditional, as apprentices; hired, to serve us entirely; or temporary servants, who serve us occasionally. Our families may also include our *visitors*; for we are taught by the fourth commandment, that we should employ our pious influence not only over our children and servants, but also over the stranger that is within our gates, Exod. xx. 10. But as Joshua's resolution is thus recorded by God, that it may be adopted by us, let us consider,

4. *What this resolution implies.* It evidently implies a *sincere and solemn purpose to employ all proper means for engaging ourselves and our families in God's service.—To employ all proper means of promoting our personal piety.* By *searching the Scriptures*, as the rule of our conduct, Psalm cxix. 128; John v. 39.—*Giving ourselves unto prayer*; secret, social, and ejaculatory, Psalm cix. iv; Eph. vi. 18.—*The exercise of faith in Christ*; coming to him, and walking in him, Matt. xi. 28; Col. ii. 6.—And *holy diligence in adding to our faith*, 2 Pet. i. 5—10, and iii. 14.—*To employ all proper means of promoting family religion.* As the *pious and prudent exercise of authority* in restraining open sin, 1 Sam. iii. 13, and requiring obedience to all the commands of God, both positive and moral, Gen. xviii. 19. *Family instructions*; plain, frequent, and unwearied, Dent vi. 7. And *family devotion*; including petition for all necessary blessings; and thanksgiving for the favours which God bestows. This is proper every morning and night; as our family wants and mercies are as often renewed, Lam. iii. 22, 23; Psalm xcii. 2. Having observed the resolution itself, let us now consider,

II. THE PROPRIETY AND IMPORTANCE OF IT. Consider,

1. *The propriety of this resolution.* It is evidently proper, because *to serve God ourselves is reasonable*, for we are his property, by right of creation and redemption, Psalm cxix. 73; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; Rom. xii. 1.—*To engage our families in*

God's service is benevolent; as this is conducive to their most extensive benefit, 1 Tim. iv. 8. *To serve God ourselves first is judicious*; as this is requisite to qualify us for usefulness, Joshua xxiv. 15, and this is necessary to render our exertions successful. Psalm li. 12, 13; Mal. ii. 6.

2. *The importance of it.* To serve God with our families must be of the utmost importance on various accounts.—It is *necessary to the removal of God's displeasure from us*. For irreligious families must be wicked families; and the curse of God is now in such houses, Prov. iii. 33. They are also exposed to God's eternal displeasure, Jer. x. 25. And these evils can be averted only by turning to God, Jer. xviii. 7, 8.—It is *highly favourable to our domestic comfort*; for it produces gentleness of manners, James iii. 17. It renders us careful to please, Rom. xv. 2. It prevents all bitter contentions, Eph. iv. 31, 32. It softens resentments, Col. iii. 12, 13. And begets tender sympathy, Rom. xii. 15. Consequently, where piety prevails, peace must be enjoyed, Isaiah xxxii. 17; James iii. 18.—It *fulfils the design of God in forming us into families*. This is, that there may be a goodly seed, Mal. ii. 15,—that is, a succession of pious characters, by which the world may be benefited, and God glorified. *It promotes the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom*. As heaven is furnished with inhabitants by means of the Church militant established on earth, so the church of Christ is replenished with members by means of pious and well regulated families. Those, who in early life have their minds well stored with sacred knowledge, and their hearts renewed by divine grace, are most likely to become general blessings to the church and the world, in their mature years. Timothy, from a child, knew the Holy Scriptures, which made him wise unto salvation; and when he became a man he excelled greatly in naturally caring for the spiritual welfare of man. Compare 2 Tim. iii. 15, with Phil. ii. 20. Hence, by means of family religion, the vineyard of the Lord is planted with fruitful trees, and his temple is adorned with its fairest ornaments, Ps. cxliv. 12, and Ps. xlv. 16. *It renders our final account most gratifying to ourselves*. Our influence over our families is a talent; and we ought to employ it for their benefit, 1 Peter iv. 10. It is a talent, for which we must give a strict account, Luke xvi. 2. And its due improvement will be attended with pleasing results,

Isa. viii. 17, 18. *It is ultimately crowned with God's blessing.* Prov. iii. 33; Psalm cxxxiii. 1, 3.

From the subject before us, it appears just to infer,

1. *As this resolution is so proper and important, it must be highly worthy of our adoption.* To omit it, is *impious*; as the omission implies contempt of God's authority, and unconcern for the interests of his kingdom. To omit it, is *cruel* and *unnatural*; as this omission withholds the greatest possible good from our dearest connexions. To omit it, is *unwise*; as the omission exposes us to the most dreadful censure of our righteous Judge, Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. To omit it, is *contumacious*; as the omission is a direct opposition to examples recorded for our imitation. Heb. vi. 12.

2. *As this resolution is so proper and important, the omission of it cannot be justified by any possible excuse.* Not by alleged *want of talent or ability to fulfil it*;—for you can get help to begin the fulfilment of it from pious friends. You can get help to proceed in it from written forms of devotion and instruction. And God will accept you according to what you have, 2 Cor. viii. 12; Mark xiv. 8. Till you can do without crutches, use them thankfully. Not by *shame to set about it*;—for to bear the cross is your calling, Luke xiv. 27. Not by *multiplicity of secular business*; for you may and should be both diligent in business, and fervent in devotion, Rom. xii. 11. Witness Abraham, Joshua, David, Job, and Daniel, who were all men of great business and discretion; and of great piety also, Ps. cxii. 5. Not by *fear of singularity*; for we find Joshua resolving on it, though he should stand alone. When we cannot find a good example, it is our duty, our glory, and our truest interest to set one, Numb. xiv. 24. Not by *doubts respecting your success*;—for we should labour in hope of gracious fruit in this world, Eccles. xi. 6; Isa. xlv. 3, 4, and lxv. 23, and of glorious retribution in a future state. Dan. xii. 3; 1 Cor. xv. 58.

ALPHA.

LVII. THE EVIL OF INDECISION, AND THE MEANS OF RENOUNCING IT.

1 KINGS xviii. 21.

“How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him.”

FROM the history of the church and the world, it appears that in all ages there have been characters of three different descriptions among the human race: some are decidedly wicked;—some are decidedly pious;—and some are undecided; not devoted entirely, either to sin, or to God.

1. *Some are decidedly wicked.* These are either *regardless of God*, living without him in the world; without loving him, without fearing him, without worshipping him, so that “God is not in all their thoughts:” or they are *avowed enemies to God*; this they prove themselves by wilful rebellion against him; saying with hardened Pharaoh, “Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice? We know not the Lord, neither will we obey him.” Having thus walked in the counsel of the ungodly, and stood in the way of sinners, they are at last brought to sit in the seat of the scornful; where they manifest their enmity against God, by hating his government, by despising it, and by studiously opposing it.

2. *Some are decidedly pious.* Like Joshua, they resolve that whatever others do, they will serve the Lord. Like Caleb, they have another spirit in them, and they follow the Lord fully. Like Enoch, they walk with God, and have this testimony, that they please him. They pursue the path which religion prescribes; they enjoy the consolations which religion administers, and they are animated by the hopes which she inspires.

3. *Some are undecided;* not devoted *entirely*, either to *sin*, or to *God*. Such characters see the evil of sin; but painfully feel that they are not saved from it. They in some measure reverence conscience; but are not so governed by its dictates, as to ensure its smiles. In a word, they understand so well what religion requires, that they cannot sin without remorse; and at

the same time so yield to sinful propensities, that they cannot enjoy the comforts of piety. Persons of this description are censured by our Lord, as lukewarm, being neither cold nor hot; they are represented by St. James, as double-minded, and unstable in all their ways; they are described by Hosea, as a cake not turned, and having a divided heart; and they are addressed by Elijah, in our text, as halting between two opinions; not being quite resolved whether to follow the Lord, or Baal. They could not but feel some respect for the Lord; as reason, faith, and their own consciences, assured them that he was the true and only God. But they also professed some respect for Baal, because they knew this would please their king and queen. Hence the prophet thus interrogates and exhorts them: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him." Let us improve these words by considering,—the evidences of indecision in religion,—the evil of this indecision,—and the means here suggested for the abandonment of it. Consider,

I. THE EVIDENCES OF INDECISION IN RELIGION. To mention all its evidences, we cannot undertake; but the following indications of it may assist us in detecting the evil.

1. Those who are undecided in religion are *partial in selecting and keeping the ordinances of God*. Such ordinances as are fashionable, and may be attended without much self mortification, or exposure to persecution, are sure to be kept by them. Hence they hear God's word very diligently; they are found, it may be, regularly at the Lord's table; and they do not hesitate to attend public associations for pious and benevolent purposes; so that Bible Societies, Religious Tract Societies, School Committees, and even Missionary Institutions are at least occasionally countenanced by them. They will patronize these and some other excellent charities, because they are patronized also by the honourable, and those who fill the highest stations in life. But faithful self-examination, secret prayer, and searching the Scriptures in retirement, are duties not much practised by the undecided; because they feel no pleasure in them; and avowed close communion with the most decided subjects of piety they studiously shun; as that would associate them with many who are poor, and expose them to the affected contempt and sneers of the ungodly.

2. Those who are undecided in religion *rest in the external acts of religious worship*. It has been admitted, that various religious duties are attended to by them; but they perform those duties rather as means of silencing the clamours of conscience, than as means of conveying saving benefits to their souls. They keep up a fair form of godliness, but no heavenly fire burns on their altar. They say their prayers, but they do not cry like Moses, for the full and constant assurance of God's pardoning mercy, Ps. xc. 14. They do not wrestle like Jacob for the blessing of adoption, Gen. xxxii. 26. They do not strive to enter in at the straight gate of a sound conversion, Luke xiii. 24. They do not take the kingdom of heaven by holy violence, Matt. xi. 12.

3. Those who are undecided in religion *engage more heartily in their secular pursuits, than in their eternal concerns*. They are somewhat concerned to obtain spiritual good; they desire the pleasures of piety, durable riches, and honour: but they are still more concerned to obtain earthly riches, honours, and pleasures. They are somewhat alarmed by their spiritual maladies, and danger of eternal death; but they are more alarmed by bodily disease, and danger of natural death. They do not wish to displease God; but they are more studious to please men than God; and often disobey him to please them, John xii. 42, 43.

4. Those who are undecided *are without spiritual comfort*. They are without the comfort of *peace*; for conscience condemns them, and God frowns on them, 1 John iii. 20;—without the comfort of *liberty*; for they are enslaved by evil habits, Romans vii. 22, 23;—without the comfort of *victory*; for they are overcome by enemies, 2 Peter ii. 19;—without the comfort of *hope*; for they are rejected by God, Rev. iii. 16; Jeremiah vi. 30. Having observed the evidences of indecision, let us consider,

II. THE EVIL OF IT. This appears from its nature,—its tendency,—and its effects.

1. *It is evil in its nature*; as it relates to *God*: for God requires our hearts,—in seeking him, Jer. xxix. 13,—in serving him, 1 Sam. xii. 24,—in loving him, Matt. xxii. 37, 38,—and in worshipping him, John iv. 24; Prov. xxiii. 26. But indecision withholds the heart from God, and must imply *disobedience*

to him, Isa. xxix. 13. God is entitled to all the service we can render him, on account of the favours we receive from him. Dedication to God is therefore urged on us, in consideration of God's mercies, Rom. xii. 1. But indecision perverts that tribute which is so justly due to God; and must therefore imply *ingratitude* towards him, Deut. xxxii. 6; Dan. v. 23. By our baptismal covenant we engage to serve God alone; to believe what he reveals; to do what he commands; and to wage perpetual war with all his enemies. But indecision admits and entertains the world, the flesh, and the devil, as rivals with God; and must therefore imply *treachery*. It renders mankind now like the unfaithful Israelites of old, "who remembered," &c. Psalm lxxviii. 35—37.

2. *It is evil in its tendency; as it relates to others.* Indecision leads the wicked to blaspheme the word of God, and speak reproachfully of his servants. However blind God's enemies may be to their own faults, they well understand what the professing servants of God ought to be; and when they perceive those who make some pretensions to religion, selfish in their pursuits, worldly in their affections, and unholy in their tempers and conduct, they fail not to pronounce exalted devotion mere fanatical delusion, and the gospel a cunningly devised fable. Thus careless sinners are hardened in transgression: and this consideration fastened a dreadful sting in the conscience of David after his fall; "Howbeit, by this deed, thou hast given the enemies of God great occasion to blaspheme," 2 Sam. xii. 14. Indecision stumbles the weak, by its glaring inconsistencies. Those who sometimes assume the garb of piety, and are at other times earthly in their desires, sensual in their indulgences, and devilish in their dispositions, can hardly fail of proving stumbling-blocks to others. Hence we are required to make straight paths for our feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. Heb. xii. 13.

3. *It is evil in its effects; as it relates to ourselves.* It is evil in its effects, because it is *delusire*. As it pays some respect to religion in this world, it begets a hope of enjoying the rewards of piety in the next. But this hope will certainly be disappointed; for those who are not entirely decided for God, on earth, will be disowned and punished by him in a future state, Luke xiii. 24. It is evil in its effects, because it is

foolish. For as indecision by its admissions condemns sin, and by its aberrations cannot be acceptable to God; it must consequently expose its subjects at once to the censures of heaven, the scorn of earth, and the upbraidings of hell: it shares in the punishment of sin, without tasting its pleasures; and in the reproach of piety, without enjoying its benefits. That we may be saved from these dreadful effects, let us recollect the cause, and pass on to consider,

III. THE MEANS SUGGESTED FOR THE ABANDONMENT OF THIS EVIL. These are, to consider the claims of God on us,—and to follow him.

1. *Consider the claims of Jehovah on you as your God.* He is *God: the good Being.* This is evident. For he is perfectly good in himself; the author of all good in others; and infinitely good towards us. He is perfectly good in *himself*. He is supreme in dignity; almighty in power; infallible in knowledge; his truth is inviolable; his purity is unsullied; his justice is inflexible; his mercy is eternal. “The Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth from generation to generation,” Ps. c. 5. He is the author of all good in *others*; all the knowledge, holiness, and happiness, now found in men and angels, emanated from God, James i. 17. He is infinitely good towards *us*. For he is our *Creator*; his hands made us and fashioned us, Psalm cxix. 73. Our *Preserver*; we are the sheep of his pasture; blessed and kept by him, Ps. xcv. 7. Our *Redeemer*; who devised and effects our redemption, Ps. cxi. 9; 1 Cor. i. 30. And our *Rewarder*, Heb. xi. 6; Rom. ii. 6, 7. *He only is the Lord*: Satan is not your God; for he neither created you, preserved you, nor redeemed you; and is so far from doing you good, and seeking your welfare, that he seeks your destruction, 1 Peter v. 8. He, therefore, should not be followed, but resisted by you, 1 Pet. v. 9; James iv. 7. Sin is not your God: for if served it would ruin you, and should be renounced, Ezek. iii. 19. The world is not your God: for it is a lying vanity, and must not be trusted in, Jonah ii. 8; Micah ii. 10. Therefore, as the Lord is God, and he only is God,

2. *Follow him.* In doing this, *let God be the principal object of your pursuit.* Follow him as your chief good. By seeking his *farour*; that it may be displayed towards you in pardoning your sins; adopting your persons; and accepting

you through Christ, Psalm iv. 6. By seeking his *image*; that it may be renewed in you by his Spirit, Psalm li. 10, and xvii. 15; 2 Cor. iii. 18. By seeking his *protection*; that you may be kept by it in this life, Psalm xvii. 7, 8. By seeking his *glory*; that you may be admitted to it in a future state, Ps. lxxiii. 24. And *follow him as he requires*. In conformity to his word, follow him *immediately*; without delay, Job. xxii. 21; Psalm cxix. 59, 60. Follow him *courageously*; without fear, Psalm cxvi. 18, 19; Isaiah li. 7, 8. Follow him *perseveringly*; without declension, Job. xxiii. 11, 12; Numb. xiv. 24. Follow him *cheerfully*; with joyful hope, Lam. iii. 24—26; John xii. 26.

ALPHA.

LVIII. MANASSEH'S REPENTANCE.

2. CHRONICLES xxxiii. 12, 13.

“And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.”

THE history of Manasseh is one of the most singular and instructive records in the sacred Scriptures. It awfully proves the depravity and wickedness of human nature; and eminently displays the goodness and mercy of God to the vilest sinners. Though Manasseh was privileged with a pious father, and trained up in the principles and ordinances of religion; he impiously despised the instructions of his youth,—cast off every moral restraint,—and abandoned himself to almost every possible species of ungodliness. Yet, by the infinite mercy of God, he was graciously apprehended,—fully reclaimed from the error of his ways,—and freely saved by sovereign grace. Such is the *substance* of the account of this memorable king of Judah, as recorded in the chapter before us; which we shall consider more at large, by attending to the impressive language of the text; “And when he was in affliction,” &c. These words will introduce to our notice the highly instructive narrative of Manasseh,

as it respects,—his character as a sinner,—his conduct as a penitent,—and his salvation as a believer. Observe,

I. HIS CHARACTER AS A SINNER. This is plainly implied in the text, and fully described in the context. Though all men are *naturally depraved* and *practically criminal* in the sight of God; it is obvious that all do not run to the same *excess in wickedness*. The sinful career of Manasseh was certainly one of the most *vile* and *opprobrious* in the history of mankind. It is very evident,

1. *He was a notorious sinner*. This charge is fully proved by the sacred historian, in the detail of this chapter. The most *infamous degeneracy* and *complicated crimes* marked the former part of Manasseh's life. He forsook the worship of Jehovah, and rushed into all the vile abominations of paganism, which he established in his own kingdom, and seduced his people to follow his profane example. He renewed the idolatrous altars and groves, which Hezekiah, his pious father, had destroyed; and in the very temple of the Lord set up an image of Baal, which he worshipped, and served "all the host of heaven." He caused his children to pass through the fire to Moloch; and in his daring impiety, practised witchcraft, and dealt with evil spirits. In the progress of his infamy, he became a ferocious persecutor, and "shed innocent blood very much, till he filled Jerusalem from one end to another." He also despised the solemn admonitions of the Lord and the prophets, and persisted in the most *incorrigible obstinacy* and *ungodly profanation*, verse 2—10. Monstrous wickedness! Notorious character! and yet,

2. *He was not a hopeless sinner*. He did not transgress beyond the reach of mercy. Though his iniquity *abounded*, Divine grace much more *abounded*. Indescribably wild as he was, the abundant mercy of God fully subdued his heart, and brought him to repentance. Behold a monster in sin, saved by the exceeding riches of mercy and grace! "Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?" Who then can despair?—"With the Lord there is mercy and plenteous redemption," and Jesus Christ is able and willing to save to the uttermost. Some of the vilest sinners have obtained mercy as *patterns* for our instruction and encouragement, 1 Cor. vi. 9—11; Eph. ii. 1—7; 1 Tim. i. 16. Among such characters, Manasseh occupies a

distinguished place; whose history in the text will now direct us to consider,

II. HIS CONDUCT AS A PENITENT. "And when he was in affliction," &c. In his *prosperity* he hardened himself against the Lord, and rejected his counsels; but when he was mercifully reduced to *adversity*, he was greatly humbled, and earnestly sought Divine mercy and deliverance. The goodness of God, which he had formerly despised, now deeply affected his mind, and led him to true repentance; which is particularly noticed in the words under consideration.

1. *The period of his repentance is specified.* "When he was in affliction." The Lord brought upon him and his people "the captains of the host of the king of Assyria;" who, having subdued them, carried Manasseh, "bound in fetters," as a degraded captive to Babylon. In *this affliction* he was deeply convinced of his sin and folly, and returned unto the God of his fathers. Afflictions in *themselves* do not *naturally* or *necessarily* change the sinner's heart; yet they frequently, by Divine grace, *instrumentally* promote the work of conversion, Ps. cxix. 71.; Hos. v. 15. The Lord employs various means to bring men to repentance. His word and spirit are the most eminent; but all the arrangements of providence are *subservient* to the same purpose. "He does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men," but for our profit; and when our afflictions are *sanctified*, they become the *means* of salvation, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. This was happily the effect of Manasseh's calamity and distress.

2. *The nature of his repentance is described.* "He besought the Lord his God, and prayed unto him." The two distinguishing properties of his repentance were, deep humility, and fervent prayer. "He humbled himself greatly."—Having discovered his true character as a sinner, and the moral turpitude of his crimes, he "abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes." His heart was truly contrite, and his humiliation *deep* and *unfeigned*. He humbled himself not so much for his *affliction*, as for his *wickedness*. He confessed his sins with *penitential sorrow*, and *loathed himself* for all the abominations of his heart and life. He also "besought the Lord and prayed unto him." This language expresses the peculiar *earnestness* and *importunity* of his devotion. He no more prayed

to idols, but called on "the Lord his God," and was delivered. His prayer was *sincere, humble, persevering, and believing*. Deep humility and importunate prayer invariably distinguish the conduct of every true penitent, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19; Luke xviii. 13; Acts ix. 11. Such was unquestionably the repentance of Manasseh: the blessed result of which will appear, if we consider,

III. HIS SALVATION AS A BELIEVER. "The Lord was entreated," &c. Genuine repentance is always pleasing to God; it is according to his *will*, and is the *immediate effect* of his Holy Spirit. The sacrifices of a broken spirit and contrite heart he will not despise. This is clearly proved in the experience of Manasseh.

1. *He obtained the pardoning mercy of God.* "He was entreated of him," &c. He did not seek the Lord in vain. He both heard and answered his supplication; he *freely pardoned* all his iniquities, and *accepted* his *person* through the promised Messiah: he manifested his favour to his soul, and as an evidence of his loving-kindness, he delivered him from all his enemies, and "brought him back to Jerusalem."—O the depth of mercy!—The *vilest characters* who *repent* and *believe* will *certainly* obtain pardon and "peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Isaiah lv. 6, 7; Acts x, 43; 1 John i. 9.

2. *He received a saving knowledge of God.* "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God." He knew the *power*, the *mercy*, and *love* of God, in his *own salvation*. He therefore renounced idolatry, and resolved to serve Jehovah alone, as the only true and living "God of his fathers." His knowledge thus became *influential*, and produced "fruits meet for repentance," verse 15, 16. Behold the glorious triumphs of redeeming grace!—What an example of warning, encouragement, and instruction.

ETA.

LIX. PARDONING MERCY.

NEHEMIAH ix. 17.

“And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.”

THE mercy of God is one of the most interesting subjects that can possibly occupy the human mind. This perfection of the Deity renders him peculiarly glorious and endearing to mankind. If he were *unmerciful*, salvation would be *impossible*, and our state *deplorable*! That we are sinners is undeniable, and it is equally certain, that if we die in our sins, we must inevitably perish. But as the Lord is a Being of infinite clemency, there is hope concerning us; the vilest sinners may repent and be forgiven. This is the uniform doctrine of revelation, the validity of which has been personally corroborated in the experience of the saints in all ages. A more striking demonstration of this truth cannot be selected than the history of the Jews. Though they were privileged above all other nations, they were in general “a people laden with iniquity, and a seed of evil doers.” Yet the Lord was mindful of them, and ever ready to pardon their sins, when they sought him with penitent and believing hearts. This is manifestly the import of the text, in which their iniquities are *distinctly confessed*, and the goodness of God *gratefully acknowledged*—“And refused to obey,” &c. These words prefer an *important charge*,—contain a *gracious declaration*, and suggest *appropriate instruction*.

I. THE TEXT PREFERS AN IMPORTANT CHARGE; “And refused to obey,” &c. Though this charge was *primarily* brought against the Jews, it is *substantially* applicable to all impenitent sinners. This will appear, by considering the respective crimes specified, all of which, it may easily be proved, we have repeatedly committed against the God of our mercies. Here is,

1. *A charge of obstinate disobedience*; “And refused to obey.” This is sufficiently evident, as it respects the Jews, from the witness of Moses and the Prophets. We are guilty of the same charge. We are under infinite obligations to the Divine Being. He is the Creator,—Sovereign,—Benefactor,—Redeemer,—Saviour,—and Judge of mankind. He therefore has a supreme and unalienable right to our entire and constant obedience; and which he justly demands both in the law and the gospel, Matt. iv. 10; Tit. ii. 11—14. But have we not all “refused to obey?” Which of his precepts have we not broken? All the impenitent are obstinately and wickedly refusing *in their hearts* to obey the word of the Lord, Job xxi. 14; Rom. xiii. 7, 8.

2. *A charge of criminal forgetfulness*. “Neither were mindful of thy wonders,” &c. The Lord wrought the most astonishing wonders among the children of Israel, in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, &c. But they soon forgot his wonders, and were unmindful of his goodness, Psalm lxxviii. 10—17; Psalm cvi. 21—26. He has also crowned each of us with loving-kindness and tender mercies, and wrought wonders in our creation, preservation, redemption, and salvation. But we have too often *unfaithfully forgotten* his innumerable benefits, and *ungratefully murmured* against his kind dispensations. We have despised the riches of his goodness, and lived in the habitual practice of ingratitude and rebellion, Isaiah i. 2, 3.

3. *A charge of hardened impenitence*. “But hardened their necks,” &c. This was certainly true of the Jews, and it is equally as true, in reference to all the ungodly. The heart is *naturally hard and unbelieving*; and by the constant practice of iniquity, the *principles* and *habits* of vice are greatly *strengthened* and *increased*. It is the very *nature* and *property* of sin, to *harden* and to render *callous* every power of the soul against God and religion. And hence the wicked, by every act of transgression, become less *susceptible* of good, and more *abandoned* to evil. This is an awful state! Prov. xxix. 1; Rom. ii. 5, 6; Heb. iii. 15. But though we are all thus *deeply implicated* in these solemn charges, and *proved guilty* in every point, yet our case admits of hope: nor is there any reason to despair, if we consider,

II. THE TEXT CONTAINS A GRACIOUS DECLARATION:—
 “Thou art a God ready to pardon,” &c. This is a most pleasing representation of the Deity, and affords the greatest encouragement to repenting sinners. It is perfectly adapted to our case as guilty culprits. However numerous and aggravated our sins may be, God is certainly “ready to pardon them.” The truth of this declaration is manifest and undeniable. Consider,

1. *The perfections of the Divine character.* God is a being not only of infinite justice, holiness, and truth; but also of essential goodness, mercy, and love. According to the text, he is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.” He is slow to punish, but ever ready to *forgive*. He waits to be gracious; his name is mercy, and his nature love, Exod. xxxiv. 5, 7.

2. *The glorious scheme of human redemption.* To pardon the guilty the law of God must be honoured, and his perfections harmonized. His moral government of the world must also appear, not only propitious and kind, but equitable and just. Now all this is fully accomplished in the bestowment and sacrificial death of his only-begotten Son, who is “the propitiation for the sins of the whole world,” Isaiah liii. 5, 6; Rom. iii. 25, 26; 2 Cor. v. 18 and 21. Thus through Jesus Christ, “a new and living way” is opened to the Father; and the chief of sinners may come boldly to the throne of grace, and obtain mercy, and find a *free* and *full* salvation.

3. *The testimonies and promises of Scripture.* The sacred writings are replete with *gracious declarations* and *precious promises* to them that repent and believe, Psalm lxxxvi. 5, and cxxx. 3, 4; Isaiah i. 18; Mich. vii. 18, 19; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts xiii. 38, 39; 1 John i. 9. All the encouraging testimonies are *divine* in their origin, and *infallible* in their accomplishment. “God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent.” He hath spoken, and he will make it good, “for he is not slack concerning his promises.”

4. *The multitudes that have obtained forgiveness.* Countless millions have experimentally proved the readiness of God to pardon. Even many of the vilest characters have obtained mercy; such as Manasseh,—the dying malefactor,—the mur-

derers of Christ,—the Corinthian converts, &c. Luke xv. 20—24; 1 Cor. vi. 9—11. There are also many living witnesses of pardoning mercy, and an innumerable multitude who have already “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Surely God is “ready to pardon.”

III. THE TEXT SUGGESTS APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTION. We may here learn,

1. *The necessity of seeking forgiveness.* We are guilty and condemned, and must therefore be *pardoned* or *punished*. God really pardons the penitent, but “will by *no means* clear the guilty” and incorrigible. Mercy must be sought by repentance and faith. We must expect pardon only in the way of God’s appointment; and if we thus seek it, he will assuredly “blot out as a thick cloud our transgressions, and as a cloud our sins.” Isaiah lv. 6, 7; Acts ii. 38, and x. 43.

2. *The possibility of obtaining forgiveness.* Thank God, wicked and unworthy as we are, mercy is attainable. Rich, free, and abundant mercy is promised to every returning penitent, Prov. xxviii. 13; Psalm cxxx. 7, 8. Others have been forgiven, and why may not we? There is sufficient mercy in God, sufficient merit in Christ, and sufficient grace in the Spirit. “Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.” Matt. xi. 28; Rev. xxii. 17.

3. *The felicity of participating forgiveness.* When God speaks peace to the soul, and “gives the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sin,” the believer is filled with unspeakable joy.—He is delivered from condemnation, adopted into the family of God, and made an heir of eternal life, Rom. v. 1, 2, and viii. 1. “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven.”

ETA.

LX. GOD'S POWER OVER THE HEART.

JOB xxiii. 16.

"God maketh my heart soft—"

AND he maketh every man's heart soft in different senses, as he is the God of nature, of providence, of grace, and of justice.

I. AS THE GOD OF NATURE. Here he makes the heart soft,

1. *Literally.* He has composed this noble part of the body of fleshly fibres, and curiously constructed them into a strong muscle, which, by its elastic nature, alternately contracts and dilates itself. By these two motions, (the systole and diastole,) the circulation of the blood is maintained, without which life would cease to exist. Now, as the soft and flexible nature of the heart is essentially needful to the continuance of these vital motions, we should take occasion therefrom to adore HIM who has thus wisely and delicately formed the human structure, Ps. cxxxix. 14—16.

2. *Figuratively.* He has endowed the heart, viewed as the seat of the passions, with all those tender sensibilities, sympathies, and emotions, which constitute *humanity*. He gave the kind parental feeling, and the filial reverential affections; he is the author of that instinctive tenderness, which prompts us to compassionate a distressed object, and almost involuntarily to attempt his relief. This strikingly illustrates his wisdom and goodness. Men, in general, are little influenced by reflection, or ideas of propriety. It was necessary, therefore, to supply the want of reflection by sensibility, so that the miseries of others, by a kind of counterblow, might strike on our feelings, and dispose us to relieve them.

II. AS THE GOD OF PROVIDENCE. Here also he maketh the heart, *i. e.* the spirit of man, soft, by *afflictive dispensations*. In this sense we understand the text. Job had once enjoyed great prosperity, but his case was now entirely reversed. Afflictions, like successive inundations, had borne away every earthly comfort. His wealth was ravished from him,—his children were no more,—his body became an ulcer,—his friends

were cruel,—and his honour was turned into contempt. This complication of evils depressed his spirits, and filled his soul with sorrow. To complete all, God withdrew his *cheering presence*, verse 8, 9, and only manifested himself in a way of *terror*, verse 15. Hence he says, “God maketh my heart soft,” &c.

And frequently, in the present day, does God make the heart soft by manifold calamities, so that the individual is ready to complain, like David, “I am poured out like water. My heart is like wax; it is melted within my bowels.” Man is allowed and designed to *feel* the strokes of a chastising Providence. Some of these strokes may well affect him deeply; such as,

1. *Pecuniary losses and embarrassed circumstances.* Poverty—want of the means of support for a dependent family &c.

2. *Bereavements of friends.* See those agonizing bleeding hearts! They have lost their first-born! The widow deplores the death of her spouse,—the orphan mourns his departed parent, &c.

3. *Bodily affliction.* Innumerable diseases attack us,—“Fever, with cheek of fire,—Consumption wan,” &c. But, however severe, these dispensations are all regulated by unerring wisdom, and infinite goodness.

III. AS THE GOD OF GRACE. In this sense he softened Job’s heart, when he drew from him that emphatical exclamation, “Behold I am vile!” &c. See also chapter xlii. 5, 6. Thus he also softened Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19,—the publican, when he “smote upon his breast,” &c.—and the Jews on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 37.

Whatever sensibilities we may naturally possess,—however our feelings may have been roused by affliction, our hearts are all *morally* and *spiritually* hard, obdurate, insensible, till melted by the grace of God. In this gracious softening of the heart, we regard,

1. *The means employed to effect it.* God frequently breaks the heart by *providential strokes*, that he may afterwards melt it by his grace.—Sometimes by the conversation, example, and reproof of a *pious friend*.—Sometimes a well-written *book* is the instrument. But most usually he employs his *written*, and especially his *preached word*. This is “a hammer and a fire,”

when applied by the Spirit of grace, to break and melt the stony unfeeling soul of man.

2. *Its various stages and degrees.*

First, God commonly begins by impressing the heart *with terror*. He rends the veil, and discovers the horrible condition of the sinner to himself. Conscience awakes, and, running to the records of memory, produces the long black catalogue of his sins,—divine justice flashes its tremendous flames around him, and rolls her awful thunders over his head,—death brandishes his dreadful sting,—and hell, with all her stores of vengeance, follows close behind. Hence his spirit is broken within him, and he groans like David. Psalm xxxviii. 1—8; xl. 12, &c.

Secondly, but where there is not so much alarm, or where the first terror is abated, by the hope of mercy, God softens the heart by melting it under *a deep sense of its vileness and ingratitude*. The soul perceives the infinite purity and excellencies of God,—the innumerable proofs of his bounty and love,—his patience, forbearance, and grace,—the beauty of holiness,—the odiousness and deformity of sin. These views fill the soul with holy relentings, and inexpressible anguish: “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Thirdly, God melts the penitent heart still further by *shedding abroad his love therein*, and revealing the mystery of Christ crucified. He bids him look to Calvary, and read his love in the wounds, and agonies, and death of Jesus. By faith, the penitent beholds the scourged back,—the pierced hands and feet,—the thorny crown,—the streaming blood of his Redeemer. And convinced that he has redemption there, the forgiveness of his sins, his heart is softened indeed, not by the spirit of bondage, but by love, the inexpressible love of Christ. He mourns, it is true, but all dread and fear are gone, except “the godly fear, the pleasing smart,” &c.

Fourthly, The heart is kept soft by *repeated manifestations* of God’s love to believers, in the means of grace.

Lastly, But he finishes this work of softening the heart, when he fully *accomplishes his ancient promises*, “I will circumcise,” &c. “I will sprinkle,” &c. Deut. xxx. 6; Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.

3. *Its salutary effects.* Admitting that man does not resist the spirit, he first becomes a *genuine penitent*, then a *real believer*, and child of God, receiving the Spirit of adoption, and victory over the world, Satan, and sin. Lastly, a *saint made perfect in love*,—fully renewed after the Divine image, he “puts on, as the elect of God, bowels,” &c.

IV. AS THE GOD OF JUSTICE. In this case he will soften, *i. e.* crush and dispirit the hearts of the impenitent. Men may harden themselves against providence and grace, but they cannot repel the blows of justice. Justice shall seize on those who reject the grace of God. Those who will not kiss the sceptre of mercy must be crushed by the iron rod of his indignation. View these miserable characters abandoned to the terrors of conscience,—their own fears, the agonies of death,—the vengeance of God, the judgment of the last day. “Can thy hands be strong, or thy heart endure?” &c. Ezek. xxii. 14. Let us address,

1. The impenitent. “Awake thou that sleepest,” &c.
2. Those who groan under providential strokes. Let these lead to Jesus, that your hearts may be softened by grace.
3. Those whose hearts are graciously softened. Beware of becoming hard again. If the wax be removed from the fire, it will lose its softness.

DELTA.

LXI. THE DIVINE REGARD TO MAN.

PSALM viii. 3, 4.

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

NATURE and Providence are full of mysteries and wonders, impenetrable by man. In the small, and in the great; in the near, and in the remote; he still perceives something to excite his astonishment, and lead him to adore the great Author of all.

But perhaps there is nothing so amazing as the regard which the infinite God pays to his diminutive creature, man. Amidst all the splendour and grandeur of his other works, that he should select man, and fix on him his peculiar attention, is a subject of admiration indeed. Thus it appeared to David, when he exclaimed, "When I consider," &c. These words are applied to Christ, by the apostle, Heb. ii. 6, 9; but they primarily refer to man considered *as man*. We view them, therefore, at present, as the expression of admiration at the divine conduct towards man; and shall,

1. TAKE A SUMMARY SURVEY OF GOD'S REGARD TO MAN, AND THE VISITS WITH WHICH HE INDULGES HIM.

God is mindful to man, 1. In all the helpless years of infancy and childhood. 2. In all the dangers and snares of youth: "Wilt thou not cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" 3. In all the active concerns of manhood. 4. In all the infirmity and decrepitude of old age. 5. He is mindful of us in providing "all things needful,"—laying the whole creation under contribution towards our benefit. For man, the sun arises in the east, and runs his daily course in the heavens.—For man, the moon and stars perform their nightly revolutions.—For man, spring puts forth its verdure,—summer its splendour,—autumn its riches,—and winter its terrors. God provided for man the innocent pleasures of the senses and imagination. He bestows friends and means of improvement, &c. Nature and providence are a constant and multifarious proof of God's regard and kindness to man. "For him kind nature wakes her genial power," &c. 6. God is mindful of man, by a constant inspection of his heart and all his ways. He visits man,

1. *By visible manifestations of his presence.* This was especially the case under the former dispensations. We may particularly refer to the manifestations made to Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, &c., and to the symbol of divine glory in the tabernacle and temple.

2. *By the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Then was "God manifested in the flesh," and "dwelt in very deed with men upon the earth." He came in the form of a servant, and fulfilled his own law,—taught the most important doctrines,—wrought the most amazing miracles in favour of his creatures,

—and at length submitted to the most degrading and cruel death, the death of the cross: and all this to expiate man's offences, to procure justification, purity, and endless felicity for man.

3. *By the influences of his Spirit.* He darts the rays of truth across the benighted mind, shewing us what we are, what are our relations, and what we must be, in order to happiness. He meets us in the closet,—in the congregation,—in solitude,—in society,—approving, or disapproving all our thoughts, words, and actions. He alarms, excites, consoles, supports, &c.

4. *By the dispensations of his Providence.* He points out our providential path. He is present in prosperity and adversity,—in health and sickness,—in dreams and visions of the night he visits man. All this is beautifully described in Job, xxxiii. 14—30. How great an object, then, of the divine regard is man! We will now,

II. INQUIRE ON WHAT GROUND WE MAY JUSTIFY THIS PROFUSION OF BOUNTY AND REGARD TO MAN. In order to this, we must ask the question, “What is man?” in three points of view.

First, What is man, viewed as a *material being*, and an *inhabitant of the present world only*? What is he in a comparative light, as to magnitude, magnificence, or duration? “When I consider thy heavens,” &c.

1. In point of *magnitude*, he is but a mere atom, compared to the globe he inhabits; this is diminutive, compared to the sun and planets; the solar system is but a point, compared to the innumerable fixed stars, whose distances and magnitudes are so immense; and these, perhaps, but a point compared to the whole universe of worlds! What then is man, compared with the whole? Well might David exclaim, “Lord! what is man,” &c.

2. In point of *splendour and magnificence*. Here alas! man, and the whole globe he inhabits, are completely obscured by that radiant glory which the heavens exhibit to view.

3. In point of *duration*; “What is man.” The heavenly hosts have existed from the creation, and will continue till its final close. But man is the creature of a day; his life is short

at longest, and is abridged by numberless accidents, diseases, &c.—seventy, sixty, forty, twenty years,—a moment! a nothing!

Looking at man in this light only, the Divine conduct towards him is more mysterious than ever. We must inquire,

Secondly, What is man, considered as an intelligent being and destined to be the inhabitant of an eternal world? Here the clouds will begin to disperse, and we shall see the wisdom, as well as goodness, of God towards man. 1. Man is a *rational immaterial creature*. Here let us contemplate,—the extent of his *understanding*,—the energy of his *will*,—the ardour of his *affections*,—the unconquerable nature of his *hope*,—his amazing *capacity* for misery or bliss,—the *impotence of worldly good or evil*, to fill that capacity; God only can render him completely created, or completely blessed.

2. Man is an *immortal creature*,—and those vast powers which he possesses must be all exercised for ever, either by bliss or woe. Here his true importance is seen, and we can no longer wonder at all the love and kindness God manifests towards him. A creature of such capacities, an immortal creature, fully justifies all the Divine conduct. Our only remaining inquiry now is, In what state is man to require such visits as God makes to him? Or, in other words,

Thirdly, What is man, considered as a moral agent and a sinner?

1. As a *moral agent*, he is under the Divine law, and accountable for his actions to God the sovereign judge.

2. As a *sinner*, he has violated that law, and exposed himself to its curse, which is death, the final ruin of body and soul. His nature is also polluted,—radically impure,—averse from good,—prone to evil. Out of this state of danger and corruption he cannot redeem himself: nothing but unmerited mercy can restore him to the favour and image of God; but mercy can operate in no other way than through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Hence he died, “the just for the unjust,” &c. Hence, his Spirit is sent to apply his blood, and purges our consciences, &c.

Here then we behold the reason why God visits man, &c. It

is to redeem him from eternal woe, to exalt him to eternal life. Let us conclude,

1. By expostulating with those who trifle with their souls, and barter them for worldly vanities. Will you ungratefully, madly, despise what heaven values at such a rate? &c.

2. By consoling those who enter into the designs of God. What shall he deny you? Rom. viii. 32.

DELTA.

LXII. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

PSALM xxxix. 1.

“I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.”

THERE is no part of man which is more important than the tongue; very much depends on the sanctification or the perversion of it, with regard both to ourselves and others. Employ it aright, and it will be your glory; for God will be glorified, and mankind will be blessed by it. Employ it wrong, and it will be your shame; for you will thereby prove public curses, by scattering fire-brands, arrows, and death, among those around you; and at the same time, subject yourselves to “a dreadful looking for of judgment.”

As life and death are thus in the power of the tongue; as he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief; and as this member is naturally unruled, we see the propriety of laying it under due restraint, and the wisdom of David’s resolution, as expressed in our text; “I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.” In improving these words, let us consider the evil resolved against,—and the resolution here formed, for the purpose of preventing it.

I. THE EVIL RESOLVED AGAINST;—sinning with the tongue. As the tongue is capable of sinning, it may be proper to notice,

First, *How, or in what respects the tongue may, and does sin.*

1. It may, and does sin, by *profane speeches*. This it does when it profanes God's *day*, his *word*, his *name*, and his *honour*. It profanes God's *day*, by unnecessary worldly conversation. The Lord's *day* is set apart for his service, and in keeping it we are required to be devout in our words, as well as our ways, Isaiah lviii. 13, 14. It profanes God's *word*, by light and jocular applications of it to trifling purposes. Those, who in defiance both of piety and decency, seek to raise a laugh, by what they deem a witty citation of Scripture, must be considered as despisers of it, Prov. xiii. 13. It profanes God's *name*, by taking it in vain : which is done, when his titles and perfections are uttered irreverently, Exod. xx. 7.—It also profanes God's name by vain swearing, Matt. v. 37 ; and by perjury, or false swearing, Mal. iii. 5. "And I will come," &c.—It profanes God's *honour*, by execrations, or imprecations of the evil on the objects around us, Psalm cix. 17, 18. Hereby men usurp the prerogative of God, and degrade his image in man, James iii. 9. The tongue also profanes God's honour, by murmurings, Jude 14, 15, 16. For hereby his goodness, or wisdom, or power, must be denied.

2. The tongue may, and does sin, by *uncharitable speeches*.

As, By *detraction* ; or studiously lessening the reputation of others. This is done when their excellencies are concealed, and their infirmities are designedly magnified, 2 Cor. x. 10.—By *whispering* ; or privately mentioning the faults of the absent. This separates friends, Prov. xvi. 28 ; and is detested by God, Prov. vi. 16—19.—By *backbiting* ; or open defamation, Ps. xv. 3 Prov. xxv. 23 ; Tit. iii. 2.—By *talebearing* ; or bringing reports to persons at variance, for the purpose of widening the breach between them, Prov. xxvi. 20—22 ; Lev. xix. 16.—By *reviling* ; *i. e.* unjust or bitter reproach, 1 Cor. vi. 10. I might have added, by *slandering*, for,

3. The tongue may, and does sin, by *false* and *lying speeches*.—By *jocular lies*, like those of the ancient Israelites, who made the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies, Hos. vii. 3.—By *officious lies* ; employed either to procure some desired object, like that of Jacob, Gen. xxvii. 18, 19 ; or to prevent some dreaded evil, like that of Rahab,

Josh. ii. 4, 5; or to avoid some merited censure, like that of Sarah, Gen. xviii. 15.—By *lucrative* lies; to obtain worldly wealth, like those of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, 2 Kings v. 22.—By *ostentatious* lies; to obtain honour, like those of Satan, Luke iv. 6.—And by *malicious* lies; invented and propagated for the purpose of injuring others, like those fabricated by the accusers of Naboth, in compliance with the command of Jezebel. 1 Kings xxi. 15.

4. The tongue may, and does sin, by *obscene or unchaste speeches*. These always indicate an impure mind, Matt. xii. 35. And they are expressly forbidden by God, Eph. iv. 29, and v. 3, 4.

Having noticed how the tongue sins, let us observe,
Secondly, *The parties against whom it sins.*

1. It sins against *God*; by dishonouring him and his service, Mal. iii. 13, 14.

2. It sins against our *neighbours*; by injuring them, James iii. 6.

3. It sins against *our own souls*; by exposing us to condemnation at the day of judgment. Matt xii. 36, 37.

This being the case, let us attentively consider,

II. THE RESOLUTION FORMED FOR THE PURPOSE OF PREVENTING THIS EVIL. "I said, I will take heed to my ways." This holy resolution we cannot but approve of. Let us therefore endeavour to improve it by adopting it, and taking heed to our ways:—

1. *To our past ways, with penitent recollection.* Manifest this,—by faithful *self-examination*. Have we offended with our tongues, by profane, or uncharitable, or false, or unchaste words? Let us impartially search our own ways, Lam. iii. 40. And let us earnestly entreat God to search and teach us, Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24; Job xxxiv. 31, 32;—by sincere *repentance*; this must include candid confession, Psalm li. 3, and xxxviii. 18; entire reformation, Lam. iii. 40; and just restitution, Luke xix. 8; and by fervent *prayer*,—for pardoning mercy, Lam. iii. 41; Ps. xxv. 11,—and for gracious renewal of heart, Ps. li. 10, that good communications may in future proceed from a good heart within us, Matt. xii. 34, 35.

2. *Let us take heed to our present ways with serious consideration.* During every season of social intercourse, let us

consider,—*this may be our last conversation in this world.* For human life is uncertain, Prov. xxvii. 1. And the continuation of our social powers is still more uncertain than life itself. By disease, or by accident, we may at any time be rendered incapable of serving others by our communications. Consider also,—we must certainly give *a strict account to God*, for all the opportunities we enjoy of being useful to others, Eccles. xii. 14. And he who will certainly judge us, now *hears us*. Psalm cxxxix. 1—4.

3. *Let us take heed to our future ways, with firm and pious purpose.* Like David here, let us also resolve to take heed to *our ways*,—by carefully *avoiding* all *sinful conversation*. To this we may be excited by temptations from Satan; by the examples around us; or by evil propensities within us. But when the tongue, like an unruly beast of burden, appears inclined to deviate from the right course, it must be restrained, Psalm xxxix. 1; James i. 26; by laying up sacred *truth* for purposes of *usefulness*. Those whose mouths would speak wisdom, must be careful that the law of God may be in their hearts, Psalm xxxvii. 30, 31.—By studying and endeavouring to discourse *profitably*. That we may provoke to love, and to good works, we are required to consider one another, Heb. x. 24. We should consider each other's religious experience, and circumstances in life, that we may be rendered habitually capable of speaking to every one a word in season, Prov. xv. 23; Col. iv. 6. Say with David, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." Say this *in your hearts*: let it be the steadfast determination of your souls, that your mouths shall not transgress, Psalm xvii. 3. Say this *to God*, by way of covenant engagement, Psalm cxix. 106. And while we thus resolve with David, that we may succeed as he did, let us *pray* as he did, Psalm xix. 14. "Let the words," &c. Then we may confidently expect the fulfilment of our desire, Ps. cxlv. 18, 19. Thus say you, and thus act, by the assistance of Divine grace, then the most pleasing effects will result from the resolution you adopt.

1. *Hereby others will be edified.* You are called, as Christians, to do good, Gal. vi. 10. The talent of speech is a gift of God, which he requires you to employ for the benefit of others, 1 Peter, iv. 10; Eph. iv. 29. And those who employ

this talent faithfully, hereby become general blessings to mankind, Prov. x. 21.

2. *Hereby the comforts of your own minds will be improved.* This will render the days of your life truly good, 1 Peter iii. 10—12. And this will ensure the smiles of conscience, 2 Cor. i. 12.

3. *Hereby God will be honoured,* Matt. v. 16,—By ordering your conversation aright, and as becometh the gospel,—the complaints of the murmurers will be suppressed,—the cavils of infidels will be silenced,—the salvation of penitents will be promoted; and your religious profession will be adorned; for if a man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man; James iii. 2.

ALPHA.

LXIII. PRAYER.

PSALM lV. 17.

“Evening and Morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice.”

AMONG all the duties connected with religion, none is of greater importance than that of prayer. Man, on account of sin, is depraved, polluted, guilty, ignorant, and estranged from God. God hath richly provided for creatures so unfavourably circumstanced; the Lord Jesus is our Mediator; the Holy Spirit enlightens and instructs; the sacred scriptures are our directory; and prayer is the means appointed by heaven for our obtaining all the blessings thus provided. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we should rightly *understand its nature*;—*properly attend to its exercise*;—and thus *secure success* in a duty, upon the right performance of which so much depends. Our text suggests such ideas as these; and we will endeavour to consider,

I. THE NATURE OF PRAYER. Prayer is the humble expression of our wants and of our desires to Almighty God; and it comprehends, at least, the following particulars:

1. *Prayer is an acknowledgement of the being and of the providence of God*; “He that cometh to God must believe that he is;”—an expression of our dependence upon God;—and a profession of our belief in his omnipotence, goodness, grace, and bounty. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

2. *Prayer re-establishes communion between God and man*. It opens and maintains intercourse with the skies. But above all,

3. *Prayer is the grand means by which we obtain our spiritual blessings from the hands of God*. On account of ourselves, our bodies, souls, and circumstances, we are encouraged to pray: see Psalm vi. 2, lv. 1; Gen. xxiv. 12; 1 Chron. iv. 10; Eph. vi. 18; Matt. vii. 7, &c. We pray for our friends, neighbours, country, and for the world at large; we pray for the prosperity of the church. In short, we are *commanded*, Phil. iv. 6, “In every thing by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God,”

4. But nothing is real prayer, whether it be expressed by the aid of a form, or otherwise, except it arise sincerely from the heart, and is presented through Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and man, accompanied at all times by a measure of faith. See John xiv. 6; James i. 6, 7.

Having made these remarks on prayer in general; let us now more particularly attend to,

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH THE AUTHOR OF OUR TEXT PERFORMED THIS DUTY. This was distinguished by *fervour*,—*regularity*,—and *frequency*.

I. *Fervour* in prayer is the earnest manner in which we breathe out our desires to God; and “cry aloud,” is the expression in the text, by which this fervour is signified; a phrase meaning not so much the strength of the voice, as the ardour of the soul. If the former were meant, many excellent persons could never be fervent at all. The importance of this quality in prayer may be understood by almost the slightest reference to the value of every blessing which God bestows;—the mighty means by which such blessings are procured;—and the essential

importance of those blessings, as they are connected with our present and our everlasting welfare. Or if any thing more be necessary to impress our minds with the nature and propriety of this fervour, let us think on our great Redeemer, *who being in an agony prayed more earnestly*, Luke xxii. 44; and on the Spirit itself making intercession for us *with groanings which cannot be uttered*. Rom. viii. 26.

2. *Regularity* was associated with the Psalmist's performance of this duty. He had stated times for prayer.—*Evening*;—after having experienced the day of God's providential care; after engagements, amidst which, though necessary ones, he had probably erred; after even religious services which had been attended with much imperfection; and when, too, he was about to abandon himself to the defenceless state of sleep, how proper, how seasonable, to acknowledge the divine care, to implore pardon for what had been wrongly done, carelessly omitted, or imperfectly performed; and crave during the night, the protection of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps.—*Morning*;—How seasonable too is this period for prayer!—Awake from sleep, that might have ended in calamity, or in death! How proper to acknowledge the divine goodness; and how necessary to seek that providential aid, without which we shall, during every day, “fall into sin, and run into danger!”—And because, amidst the multiplicity and the troubles of human engagements, the mind may become forgetful of better things, how seasonable and how salutary to retire at *Noon*!—to recal the dissipated thoughts, and renew communion with God by such a solemn act! Besides, such stated times for prayer, when formed into a habit, may lead to the performance of the duty, when better motives are not so active as they should be. And do not creatures, circumstanced as we are, need every help?

3. *Frequency* is another thing signified by the expressions, *evening, morning, noon*. It is true that if we engage in this exercise from a mere sense of duty, and if there be no strong sense of want, no pleasing approach through Christ, who is the life and soul of all true devotion; no faith, no holy fervour; then, though the necessity of the duty has lost none of its force, to be thus frequently engaged will be real drudgery: but when prayer is associated with the above qualifications, the exercise will be more or less pleasing; we shall have recourse to it as to a thing

that we love; frequency in the engagement will follow of course; and we shall feel with the Psalmist,

III. THE CONFIDENCE OF SUCCESS WHICH HE EXPRESSES.

“He shall (or will) hear my voice.” See Gen. xxx. 6; Numb. xx. 16; Psalm iii. 4.

1. This confidence is founded on,—his knowledge of God’s gracious disposition, Psalm lxxv. 2;—his belief of the Divine promise, Psalm l. 15;—and his experience of past favours, Psalm vi. 9, and xxxiv. 4.

2. We may be satisfied that God hears us,—when we feel access to the throne of grace;—when we have direct answers to prayer;—and when, though there is no direct answer, we are cheered with the hope, that God, in proper time, will surely hear.

Let me inquire, 1. Are you, as individuals, people of prayer? of sincere, fervent prayer? of family, of closet prayer? 2. Have you stated times for prayer? and do you embrace those times? 3. Do you delight in the holy exercise? 4. Above all, have you answers to your prayers?

No engagements can be more profitable to us than those of prayer. Let us therefore, under no pretence or delusion, neglect so important a concern.

GAMMA.

LXIV. A REWARD FOR THE RIGHTEOUS.

PSALM lviii. 11.

“Verily there is a reward for the righteous.”

IN the apostolic age, there were individuals who professed to know God, but in works denied him; “being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” For, notwithstanding “the heavens declare the glory of God,” and the earth is full of his riches, and that which may be known of God is manifest in his works; yet the practice of denying God, how-

ever impious it may appear in its character, and however destructive in its tendency, has been fatally prevalent in all ages, and among all the gradations of society. Some have denied his existence, and said in their hearts, "There is no God." Some have denied his intelligence, and said, "Tush, how doth God know?" Some have denied his providence, and asserted that "all things come alike to all." And some have denied his retributive justice, and insolently said, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him?" &c., Job xxi. 15; Malachi iii. 14. These sentiments have not been exclusively confined to infidels, but they have too frequently obtruded on the attention of the pious, and harassed the minds of the people of God. The Psalmist, having seen the prosperity of the wicked, was led to exclaim, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain," &c., Psalm lxxiii. 13. To repress such unprofitable reasonings, and encourage the souls of the righteous to trust in the Lord for ever, the text is peculiarly appropriate. We will therefore consider,

I. WHAT ARE THE DISCRIMINATING FEATURES WHICH DISTINGUISH THE RIGHTEOUS.

II. WHAT IS THAT REWARD TO WHICH THE RIGHTEOUS ARE ENTITLED.

III. WHAT EVIDENCES HAVE WE FOR CREDITING THE ASSERTION IN THE TEXT.

1. In describing the righteous we must distinguish them from the great mass of mankind, from the world that "lieth in wickedness." Rom. iii. 10.

2. We must distinguish them from mere moralists, who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others, Rom. x. 3. In describing the righteous, we characterise them,

1. *By the genuineness and spirituality of their faith.* Righteous men are men of faith, Heb. xi. 3—7. Righteousness is obtained by faith, Rom. iv. 3, 5, 13, 20, 22; Gal. iii. 6. But faith must have an object; this is the Lord Jesus Christ, who became sin for us,—he "who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Hence the sinner, who is deeply humbled before God, and cut off from all trust in his own fancied righteousness, comes to Christ, and believes in him with his heart unto righteousness. Christ then is made unto him righteousness, not only by the imputation of his merits, but by the implantation of his nature.

2. *By the rectitude and purity of their principles.* Righteousness is rectitude, justice, equity. Righteous men are such as have their hearts right with God; whose views, and aims, and objects, are all directed towards him. Zacharias and Elizabeth “were both righteous before God;” aiming at his glory, doing his will, and approving themselves before him. The principles of the wicked are selfish and erroneous, and their conduct crooked, wayward, and unjust.

3. *By the consistency of their conduct.* “He that doeth righteousness is righteous.” A good tree bringeth forth good fruit. Righteous men have righteous lives; their practices are regulated by the rules of righteousness.

II. WHAT IS THAT REWARD TO WHICH THE RIGHTEOUS ARE ENTITLED. Reward signifies recompense or requital for service done, or actions performed.

1. *The reward of the righteous is a gracious and voluntary reward.* It is not what they are entitled to, on the ground of merit, or in consequence of desert, for in that case it would be wages, and it could not be withheld without manifest injustice. But the good which God will bestow upon the righteous is so far above all their services, both in regard to its excellence and duration, that it is impossible to consider it in any other view, than as a gracious and voluntary reward. Hence it is uniformly considered as a gift freely imparted, and not a debt reluctantly discharged. Rom. vi. 23; Rev. ii. 7, 10, 17.

2. *The reward of the righteous is distant and remote.* The scene of labour and toil is earth, but the place of our reward is heaven; and between the labour and the rest, the warfare and the victory, the cross and the crown, there is not unfrequently a great interval of time. God bestows the reward in what proportions he pleases, and at what period he pleases. There is often a considerable degree of pleasure accompanying good actions in this world, and this has induced some to say, that “virtue is its own reward:” but this arises from the necessary connection subsisting between holiness and happiness; and not from the reward which God will bestow upon his people. The Scriptures uniformly represent our reward as being in heaven. Indeed, the frail and mortal tabernacle would be incapable of bearing the weight of glory which God will bestow as the reward of the

righteous; nor would it be consistent with our present probationary state to be rewarded here.

3. *The reward of the righteous is suitable and proportionate.* The reward flows from a principle of grace, but it is regulated according to the rule of justice. God will reward every man according to his works; a man whose labours have been abundant, will have an abundant reward. Who can suppose that the penitent thief, who escaped from an ignominious tree to paradise, will have a reward proportionate with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, whose labours were unparalleled? The rewards will be various. Matt. x. 41, 42; 2 Cor. ix. 6.

4. *The reward of the righteous is glorious and eternal, and therefore worthy of its great Author.* Earthly monarchs have sometimes lavished rewards upon their favourites, who have risked their lives in the defence of their country; new titles have been added to their names, and new accessions to their property; but what are these compared to the rewards of the righteous? The inspired writers attempt to describe this reward, and their descriptions are most certainly the best that can be embodied in mortal language; but to suppose that they can convey adequate ideas of the reward itself, is as absurd as to imagine that a painted flame can convey adequate ideas of fire; or the picture of a philosopher convey correct conceptions of the vast capacities of his mind. In the descriptions of this reward we remark two things; a complete freedom from all evil, both moral and natural, and from all possibility of evil; and the eternal enjoyment of all the good of which their natures are capable.

III. WHAT EVIDENCES HAVE WE FOR CREDITING THE ASSERTION IN THE TEXT? We may infer that there is a reward for the righteous,

1. *From the character of God.* He is a being of infinite goodness, and his goodness will incline him to reward the righteous. He is a being of infinite justice, and his justice prompts him to render to every man according to his works.

2. *From the positive declarations of Scripture.* The text is a sufficient evidence. Can this text mean any thing else? Can it bear any other interpretation? But we need not resort to a solitary text to prove this comfortable doctrine. See Gen. xv. 1; Matt. xix. 28, 29; Heb. xi. 6; Rev. xxii. 14.

3. *From the general consent of mankind.* Go where we will, among all classes of men, we find the following sentiment almost universally prevalent; that there is another world, where the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished. Infidels may call this a vulgar error, but Christians glory in it, as an incontestible truth; and a truth that adds to virtue its most commanding influence, and furnishes the righteous with their highest consolation.

Inferences:—

1. *If there is a reward for the righteous, should we not all be emulous to become righteous?* Is not this reward highly to be desired, devoutly to be wished? Can any of my hearers think of the honour, dignity, and endless blessedness that it presents, and not feel an unquenchable desire to possess it? Oh! let us seek to become righteous, that we may enjoy the reward of righteousness.

2. *If there is a reward for the righteous, this should reconcile them to all the afflictions and tribulations which they may now be called to sustain.* This is their seed time, eternity is their harvest; and oh! this harvest will more than compensate for all their labours in breaking up the fallow ground, &c.

3. *If there is a reward for the righteous, this may serve to silence all the cavils and sneers of the infidel, who says,* “Where is the promise of his coming,” &c.

4. *If there is a reward for the righteous, what will become of the wicked?* Have they no reward? Yes, Psalm ix. 17, and xi. 6; Prov. xi. 21.

BETA.

LXV. THE EXTENSION OF THE WORD OF GOD ABROAD, INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH ITS REVIVAL AT HOME.

PSALM lxxvii. 1, 2.

“God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.”

THIS book ever has been, and still continues to be, highly prized by the pious. This arises *partly* from the vein of piety

which runs through it ; *partly* from much of its language, in its confessions, petitions, thanksgivings, and praises appropriately expressing their own feelings ; *partly* from the *record* it contains of the past history of the church of God ; and *partly* from the view it furnishes of its future increase and glory. Our text belongs to the last class ; it points to a state of things which we have not yet seen. I am going to endeavour to show,

I. THAT GOD'S WAY IS NOT AT PRESENT KNOWN IN ALL THE EARTH, NOR HIS SAVING HEALTH AMONG ALL NATIONS. Before we establish the proposition, it may be proper to offer one or two explanatory remarks on the expressions,—“God's way,” and “his saving health.” Substantially they signify the same thing, while they furnish two different views of the spiritual condition of those to whom they refer. According to the former, they are not only not *in* God's way, but they are *strangers* to it ; according to the latter, they are *diseased*, desirous of being *healed*, but alike strangers to the *physician* and the *remedy*. Let us now establish the proposition. The world, when morally considered, may properly be divided into four classes.

1. *Pagans*. These include considerably more than half the population of the globe ; they exist in all the gradations of society ; from the savage in the desert, to the throne of China. These all have some sense of sin,—the necessity of pardon,—the danger of punishment ; but neither Lamism, Bramism, Boodism, nor any other system in the whole pagan world, is acquainted with God's method of saving sinners.

2. *Mahometans*. These stand on higher ground than Pagans. Their Koran teaches the being and unity of God, and interdicts all worship but that which is offered to him. Hence they are neither polytheists, nor idolaters ; yet they are ignorant of God's way of saving sinners. Hence they reject Christ as the Saviour, exclude women from the hope of immortality, by denying that they have souls, and allow men to be mere sensualists.

3. *Jews*. These occupy yet higher ground. They possess the Old Testament. In addition to other important matter, it contains the moral and ceremonial law. The former prescribes the duty of the creature, and asserts the claims of the Creator ;

the latter is a provision of mercy for the benefit of the sinner. The ceremonial law is the gospel in type, or shadow, Heb. x. 1. So long as this was in operation among the Jews, they knew God's way; but ever since they rejected Christ, the *real* sacrifice, the *typical* one has ceased. According to the doctrine of Moses, recognized by St. Paul, they are in a deplorable condition. Heb. ix. 22.

4. *Christians.* These may be considered under three distinct heads.

(1.) *The Roman Catholics.* These are very numerous, having extended themselves more or less over every quarter of the globe. In general they are profoundly ignorant of religion, not, except in rare cases, being permitted to read the Bible. In general also exceedingly depraved, which is the natural consequence of priestly absolution and purgatory.

(2.) *The Greek Church.* Between them and the Roman Catholics there are many points of resemblance; like them, they believe in transubstantiation,—pray to angels and saints,—pray for the dead; and though they do not use *images*, they use *pictures* in their worship.

(3.) *The Reformed Churches.* These have the Bible in their different languages: some of them make it their directory; the mass do not. Look at the ignorance of many in cities, towns, and villages of the most enlightened nation under heaven. Review the whole, and what do we see? Not a valley full of dry bones, but a world full of dead souls. Shall they always remain so? No: for we proceed to show,

II. THAT IT IS GOD'S WILL THAT HIS WAY SHOULD BE KNOWN IN ALL THE EARTH, AND HIS SAVING HEALTH AMONG ALL NATIONS. This is demonstrable,

1. *From all those passages of Scripture which teach that all nations are to be blessed in Christ.* Such particularly was the promise to Abraham, Gen. xii. 3,—the promise in reference to the Gentiles, Isaiah, ix. 7, lx. 3,—the message of the angel to the shepherds. Luke ii. 10, 11.

2. *From our Lord's commission to his apostles.* Remark the *subject* of the commission,—*preach the gospel*; the *objects* of it,—*every creature*; the extent of it,—*all the world*.

3. *From the prophetic representations of Isaiah, Isa. ii. 2, 4; and Daniel, Dan. ii. 31, &c.*

4. *From our Lord's parables of the mustard seed and the leaven.* They both teach that the influence of the gospel was small in its commencement,—is gradual in its progress,—and universal in its extent.

III. THAT THIS WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED BY HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITY. God could accomplish his design in nature,—providence,—grace, without employing any of his creatures. But this he has not chosen to do. Hence, to obtain the fruits of the earth, we must plough, sow, reap. Hence, if people are to be taught the way of God, they must be taught by man. Instance particularly the cases of Philip and the Eunuch, Acts viii. 26, &c. Peter and Cornelius, Acts x.—Paul's commission, Acts xxvi. 17, 18. God has not promised to enlighten any nation in any other way.

IV. THAT THE DIRECT INSTRUMENTS TO BE EMPLOYED IN MAKING GOD'S WAY KNOWN IN ALL THE EARTH ARE HIS OWN PEOPLE. Other instruments are frequently employed as their harbingers. Such are war and commerce. These remove obstructions, level mountains, fill valleys, drain marshes, and build bridges. They have been the precursors of the gospel in many places, particularly in the east. But the *direct* instruments of making the way of the Lord known, are his own people; hence the prayer,—“God be merciful,” &c., *that thy way may be known*. The shining of God's face generally signifies divine favour: to this idea, in the text, another is added,—that of the sun's shining upon the moon, from which his rays are reflected upon the earth; so the light which the church derives from God is reflected upon the world.

1. *By an enlightened, pious, and zealous ministry.* Men who understand, experience, and live in the gospel; who enter into the sacred office, not for ease, riches, fame; but who are constrained by the love of Christ. Hence, reckless of consequences, they reprove, exhort, admonish, teach, and in many instances sacrifice the comforts of home, and expose themselves to the perils of the deep, of the torrid or the frigid zone, of the beasts of the forest, and the beasts of the people.

2. *By the consistent piety of her members.* By their love to Christ,—his people,—his ordinances,—by the strictness and

purity of their morals,—their peaceable deportment,—their expansive benevolence.

3. *By their individual and united exertions to promote the cause of Christ.* Hence Sunday Schools, benevolent societies, meetings for prayer, village preaching, Bible and missionary societies. All these are the effects of that revival of religion at home with which God hath blessed us.

Conclusion.

1. If piety be necessary to usefulness, let us pray for an increase of it in ourselves and others.

2. If many of our own countrymen are yet strangers to God's way, let us labour to instruct them.

3. If hundreds of millions in other lands are perishing for lack of knowledge, let us cheerfully contribute our mite to the support of pious missionaries, and pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth more labourers into the harvest.

OMEGA.

LXVI. THE CHRISTIAN CONDUCTED TO GLORY.

PSALM lxxiii. 24.

“Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.”

WHEN, at the Divine command, the Israelitish host forsook the land of Egypt, and entered upon the wilderness of the Red Sea, Jehovah was pleased to guide them as a flock by the hands of Moses and Aaron, but more especially by the mysterious pillar, which was as a cloud by day, and as a fire by night. By this instrument he safely led them through the sea,—through the difficulties and perils of the wilderness,—and conducted them to the frontiers of Canaan; then dividing Jordan before them, he received them into the land of rest, “the land flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands.” These circumstances afford our text a striking illustration, as

they form a beautiful emblem of the Christian's journey through life, under the guiding and protecting hand of Jehovah, who at length divides the stream of death for his ransomed to pass over, and receives him into the Canaan of everlasting repose. The Psalmist had been tempted to envy the wicked, verse 3, 5, but having vanquished the temptation, he laboured to turn it to an advantage, by increasing in humility, in love to God, and confidence in his care. In the text, he beautifully opposes his own character and end to that of the wicked. Instead of following the devices of my own heart, like the wicked, "thou shalt guide me with thy *counsel*." Instead of being like them, cast down into destruction when life is ended, "thou shalt receive me to *glory*." The text therefore expresses,

I. A GOOD MAN'S CONFIDENCE FOR THIS LIFE. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel." Counsel frequently means advice or instruction, frequently design or purpose. Either of these would apply here; but there is another signification, which embraces both the former, and extends much further. Counsel is properly that which adapts means to the end. When we have an important design to accomplish, we have recourse to counsel, which provides suitable means to secure our object. Now the great end which God proposes concerning us is our salvation. To accomplish this, his counsel has provided means, viz. his providence, word and Spirit. Hence, to be guided by his counsel, is to follow,

1. *The leadings of his providence.* God holds the reins of government in his own hands, and regulates human affairs. His various dispensations plainly mark out to attentive minds the path in which they should walk as to their earthly concerns, viz. their *employments, situations, and objects of pursuit*. No man can be guided by the Divine counsel who does not move in this providential road. When we get out of the way of God's appointment, we resemble a dislocated limb, for every motion gives us pain. Prov. iv. 26.

2. *The directions of his word.* The Bible explicitly reveals "the whole counsel of God." It affords ample information on every point relative to our duty, or interest; our present or future felicity. It exhibits the way of life so luminously, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

It is our only rule of faith, and of practice. It points *guilty* man to the atoning blood for *pardon*. It directs *polluted* man to seek the regenerating, purifying *influences of the Holy Spirit*. It opens to *miserable* man the richest source of *consolation*; and unfolds to *mortal* man an interminable prospect of “glory, honour, and immortality.”

3. *The teaching of his Spirit*, John xvi. 13. This is always in perfect conformity with the written word, nor can it possibly be contradictory thereto. But the Spirit is sent to open our understandings, that we may comprehend the Scriptures; to apply their doctrines and general rules to particular characters and cases; and to render the truth vital, penetrating, and efficacious. He emphatically speaks to the heart through the dispensations of providence, and the ministry of man, as well as by secret illuminations, impressions, and attractions. “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel.” The Psalmist’s language pleasingly marks,

1st. His *humility*. “Thou shalt guide me,” for I cannot guide myself. See his humiliating confession, ver. 22. Equally convinced is the Christian now, “that it is not in man who walketh to direct his steps;” he dares not trust his own understanding or heart; ‘Whither,’ he exclaims, ‘my erring judgment, and my impetuous passions, whither would you conduct me, if I were left to your guidance? Alas! experience returns a melancholy answer to this question. O my God! *thou*, thou only shalt guide me with thy counsel. I will trust in thee with all my heart, and not lean unto my own understanding. I will acknowledge thee in all my ways, that thou mayest direct my paths.’

2nd. *His submission and acquiescence*. ‘However unpleasant to flesh and blood, I cheerfully follow thy guidance.’ When a man is led or guided, he is not driven, dragged, or constrained; he voluntarily follows his conductor. The Christian is not compelled to follow the Divine counsel; he willingly consents and submits to it. This is a disposition essentially necessary, for God often conducts us through paths which cause every natural feeling to recoil.

3rd. *His strong assurance*. “Thou *shalt* guide me,” &c. He had no doubt of being safely conducted, notwithstanding all his ignorance and weakness. Thus the Christian, distrusting

himself, is nevertheless fully assured that God will guide him securely through all the vicissitudes of time. Isa. lxiii. 9; Deut. xxxii, 10, 11, 12.

II. A GOOD MAN'S CONFIDENCE FOR ETERNITY. Thou shalt "afterwards receive me to glory." All the vast machinery of Providence, and the still more wonderful economy of grace, tend to this grand purpose, to prepare the soul for glory. This is God's merciful end in all. And when the Christian arrives at the brink of that dark flood which all must pass, his God is there, to bring him in safety through, and to receive him on the shore of everlasting deliverance, where he is crowned with unwithering honours, and filled with ineffable delight. He is received,

1. *To a glory of condition.* Contrast the meanness of his condition on earth, with the unsearchable riches, the immortal beauty, and the radiant majesty to which he is the legitimate heir in the eternal state. Contrast also the imperfection of his intellectual powers, and the scantiness of his knowledge here, with the vigour of the former, and the immensity of the latter, in glory.

2. *To a glory of character.* While here, the Christian was regarded as base and mean. He was degraded, vilified, and slandered. Reproach and ignominy marked his career. But God renders his character glorious. In heaven all acknowledge him as a saint,—a son of God,—an heir of God,—a priest—a king of glory.

3. *To a solid, substantial glory.* Earthly glory is an empty bubble, calculated only to glitter and deceive. But this is "a weight of glory," a satisfying reality; the honour which comes from God, and which is suited to the dignity of man.

4. *To a permanent unfading glory.* "An eternal weight of glory." When the sun shall lose his radiance, when the stars shall be extinguished, and all nature dissolved, then shall the Christian shine with undecaying lustre, and be adorned with immortal splendours. His life, and happiness, and glory, shall last for ever. Matt. xiii. 43; Rom. ii. 7—10.

Such is the design of God. A design directly opposite to that of Satan, who wishes to guide men by the counsels of the ungodly, the corruptions of their hearts, and his own suggestions, to everlasting perdition. Into which of these designs

have we entered? Our tempers, conversation, and life, have already decided this question. Whose counsel shall guide us for the future? May we all reply,—We will follow the counsel of the Lord! Amen.

DELTA.

LXVII. THE BEST PURSUIT.

PSALM CXIX. 2.

“Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.”

WISE and good men have, in all ages, regarded religion as their supreme interest. It has, therefore, ever occupied their serious attention, and constituted the grand object of their solicitude and pursuit. Being convinced of its paramount importance, they have readily sacrificed every carnal principle, and sinful pleasure, to obtain its supreme enjoyments. They have valiantly espoused the cause of truth, and joyfully endured the reproach of Christ. Such was eminently the distinguished character, and such the conduct, of the royal Psalmist. He was most unquestionably a man of *eminent piety*, and deeply devoted to God, both in heart and life. And he not only possessed genuine religion himself, but he also strongly recommended it to the attention of others. In the text he particularly describes the *practical purity* of its influence, and the *special felicity* of its subjects. “Blessed are they that keep,” &c. In endeavouring to explain and improve these words, we shall consider,

I. THE PURSUIT SPECIFIED;—“That seek him with the whole heart.” All rational beings naturally desire and seek happiness. But all do not expect it from the *same objects*, nor seek it in the *same paths*. Mankind, in general, pursue it only in worldly enjoyments, which are necessarily imperfect

and unsatisfying, Eccles. i., 14. But, in the text, we are directed to the true source of felicity, and the manner in which it is secured. Observe,

1. *The object proposed.* "That seek *him*,"—that is, God. He is unquestionably an object supremely great and glorious. God is a being of boundless perfection, and "the fountain of living waters." From him we derive every blessing. All other objects are *finite* and *perishing*; but this is *infinite* and *immortal*. We should therefore seek the Lord as our *chief good*, and our only satisfying portion. We must seek his enlightening truth,—his pardoning mercy,—his sanctifying grace,—his indwelling presence,—his communicable fulness,—and his eternal fruition beyond the grave, Psalm xvii. 15; Rom. ii. 7. We must seek the knowledge and enjoyment of the whole triune Jehovah; the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our reconciled and covenant God, and "exceedingly great reward."

2. *The conduct described.* "That seek him with the *whole heart*." Though we are naturally "without God in the world," it is both our *duty* and *privilege* to seek and find him in the way of his own appointment. We must seek him through Jesus Christ, who is "the way, the truth, and the life; under the influence of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to convince of sin, and guide into all truth;—in the sacred exercises of genuine repentance, unfeigned faith, and fervent prayer. "With the whole heart,"—not *hypocritically*, and *lukewarmly*; but with all the powers and energies of the soul, the understanding, the will, the conscience, and the affections;—*supremely*, above every other object;—*diligently*, in all the means of salvation;—*immediately*, without delay, or procrastination;—*earnestly*, with zealous and undivided hearts;—*continually*, being faithful unto death, &c. Psalm xxvii. 4; Isa. lv. 6, 7; Jer. xxix. 13, &c. Those who thus seek the Lord will certainly find him, and greatly delight in his service; which leads us to notice.

II. THE OBEDIENCE REQUIRED. "They that keep," &c. The moral influence of religion is undeniable. When Divine grace changes the heart, it invariably *reforms* and *regulates* the conduct. When we have found the Lord, we shall *joyfully* "serve him in holiness and righteousness of life." The obedi-

ence which the Lord requires of his people is justly represented in the text: from which we learn,

1. *It must be regulated by his word.* “They that keep *thy testimonies.*” That portion of Scripture, which was extant in David’s time, he frequently denominates the law, the word, the statutes, the precepts, the judgements, the commandments, and the testimonies of the Lord. But these terms are now applicable to the *whole volume* of revelation; which is “a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our paths.” It contains every thing necessary for our moral and religious instruction. It describes all our *personal* and *relative duties*, in the most plain and intelligible language. It is the only *perfect* and *infallible* standard of Christian faith and practice. To its decisions we must uniformly appeal for *direction*, and practically exemplify its precepts, by a holy life and conversation. Isa. viii. 20; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17; Titus ii. 12.

2. *It must be conformable to his will.* “They that keep,” &c. It is not sufficient that we *read* and *understand* his Divine testimonies; but we must also *believe* and *obey* them. They must be *kept* in our *memories*,—in our *affections*,—and in our *practices*. We must *keep* them *sincerely*, and not in name and profession only;—*believingly*, in the exercise of a lively and vigorous faith;—*affectionately*, from a principle of love filling and ruling the heart;—*universally*, having impartial respect unto all his commandments;—*faithfully*, through all opposition, and indefatigable perseverance in well-doing, 1 Cor. xv. 58. Such obedience is certainly not the effect of *human energy*, but the immediate result of *Divine influence*, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. It is therefore highly pleasing and acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ; and is always accompanied with sacred pleasures in them that “keep his testimonies.” This will evidently appear, by considering,

III. THE HAPPINESS ENJOYED. “*Blessed* are they,” &c. The blessedness of the righteous is a very prominent subject of Scripture. The Lord has, in all ages, greatly honoured and blessed his faithful people. The Psalmist was a witness of the personal felicity of true piety, and experimentally proved the truth of his own declaration before us. And as religion is immutably the same, all who keep the Divine testimonies

are inexpressibly *blessed* and *happy* in the God of their salvation.

1. *They have blessed enjoyments.* They are graciously “called out of darkness into marvellous light,”—delivered from guilt and condemnation, and being adopted into the family of God, they “have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” They are *blessed* with inconceivable peace,—unspeakable joy,—the testimony of a good conscience,—and the witness of the Holy Spirit.—They participate an interest in the Saviour,—find him exceedingly precious to their souls,—and rejoice in him as their “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”—They are *blessed* in all the means of grace,—in every path of duty,—and under every dispensation of providence. The presence of the Lord is with them.—His blessing is upon them,—and all things work together for their good, Psalm xxxiii. 12. “Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord!”

2. *They have blessed anticipations.* By faith they look forward to the *blissful realities* of eternity, and “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Their present holiness is an earnest of their future blessedness. In death God will be with them, and give them a peaceful and triumphant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.—Their *bodies* will share in the resurrection of the just, and with their *perfected spirits* shall participate the ineffable glories of immortality and eternal life, Matt. v. 8; Rev. xiv. 13. How *important* and *blissful* is religion! May we prove its reality, and enjoy its felicity in life, in death, and for ever! Amen.

ETA.

LXVIII. THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF COVERING SIN, AND THE ADVANTAGES OF CONFESSING AND FORSAKING IT.

PROVERBS xxxviii. 13.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”

THERE is in fallen human nature a strong propensity to sin. This propensity is universal. Every man hath turned to his own way. The propensity to conceal or cover sin is hardly less general: sin produces shame, and shame always seeks concealment. Sin, when considered in contrast with holiness, is so big with deformity, that in order to view it without horror, it must be disguised. But can any thing be more absurd? Shall we disguise an implacable enemy, till, pleased with his appearance, we mistake him for a friend? Shall we, to render our society more agreeable, cover a dangerous wound with a patch? No! we should rather call in the aid of a skilful surgeon, yield to its exposure, and submit to the painful operation of having it probed to the bottom.

Sin is a disease, the *worst*,—the *parent* of all others. It must not be patched or skimmed over, or it will insidiously spread its poison till it terminate in a death infinitely more to be deprecated than the dissolution of the body. Let us consider,

I. THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF COVERING SIN. What is sin? “The transgression of the law,” 1 John iii. 4. Remark St. Paul’s description of the law, Rom. vii. 12. The expression *to cover sin*, may be considered either,

1. *In reference to others.* Thus viewed, it is correctly descriptive of a hypocrite, who always wears a mask. He conceals *bad* principles under an avowed zeal for *good* ones;—*bad* purposes, under a noisy reprobation of *such* purposes; and a

bad system of iniquity, under the mask of extraordinary purity and piety ;—or

2. *In reference to ourselves.* Man possesses the astonishing but awful power of practising deceit upon himself, and concealing his sins from his own view. This he does sometimes,

—*By decreasing their number.* This is accomplished *by rejecting the Divine law as the standard.* This takes hold of the inward as well as the outward man ; takes cognizance of *thoughts,—desires,—words,—actions.* And, *by adopting as the standard the lax notions of worldly and irreligious men.* According to this standard, *murder, robbery, incest,* and perhaps *adultery,* are sin ;—but let gross vice be abstained from, and, though destitute of piety towards God, or benevolence towards man, he will be pronounced a *fair,* if not a *spotless* character.

By diminishing their enormity. This is done, *by pleading the impetuosity of the passions.* ‘ Our passions are an essential part of our nature ; we did not create them :—but these incline to evil ; what great harm then can there be in obeying the mere dictates of nature ? ’ The proper answers to this question are, —*Nature is fallen and depraved,—Reason is given for the government of the passions ;—and Revelation is given for the direction of Reason.* *By pleading the strength of temptation.* Bad as human nature is, and impetuous as are their passions, believe some sinners, and they would never do wrong, but for the additional force of external temptation. This occasions a spring tide within. This brings together the unhallowed principle and its object ;—*murder* and its *victim ;—theft* and the *interdicted treasure ;—concupiscence* and the *opportunity of indulgence.* Those who offer this plea forget that there is a throne, from whence they might obtain grace to conquer temptation, Heb. iv. 16. *By pleading as a set-off against bad works a multitude of good ones.* Being judge in his own cause, he strikes the balance in his own favour. *But such shall not prosper.*

1. *He who hides his sins from others shall not eventually prosper.* It is a difficulty approaching to impossibility to act an assumed character for a series of years without detection ; his real character will *probably* be discovered at *death,—certainly* in the *final judgment.*

2. *He who hides his sins from himself cannot prosper.*

Concealment neither alters their number nor turpitude. He shall not enjoy spiritual prosperity here; for concealment is inconsistent with genuine repentance, without which there can be no salvation. He shall not prosper hereafter; for he shall be judged by God's law, and not by human opinion.

II. THE NATURE AND ADVANTAGES OF CONFESSING AND FORSAKING IT. Before we enter upon this part, it may be proper to remark, that we do not obtain mercy *for the sake of* confessing and forsaking sin, but through the death of Christ. The latter is the great *procuring cause* of mercy; the former *the way* to it.

1. *Our confession must be spiritual.* God looks at the heart; verbal acknowledgments, which do not proceed from thence, are an abomination to the Lord.

2. *Our sin must be confessed as a great evil.* By many it is represented as a little thing: hence the mild epithets bestowed on enormous crimes; *seducers* and *adulterers* are called *protectors*; and *murderous duels* are styled *affairs of honour*. The Bible always speaks of it as the greatest evil, Rom. vii. 13. With this representation exactly harmonize the *punishments inflicted upon it*, and *the method appointed for its cure*. On any other supposition, than that sin is an indescribably great evil, neither its punishments, nor the mighty apparatus appointed for its forgiveness and removal, can possibly be harmonized either with the *wisdom* or *goodness* of God.

3. *Our sin must be confessed as deserving special punishment.* The sins of the Heathens will not go unpunished, Jer. x. 25;—the sins of those who live in popish countries possess higher aggravation;—but the sins of Protestants possess higher aggravation still, and are liable to severer punishment, Luke xii. 47, 48. *But sin must also be forsaken*,—in practice, Isa. lv. 7, and in affection, Ps. lxvi. 18.

All such shall have mercy,—in the forgiveness of their sins, —in succour under trials,—in support and comfort in the hour of death,—and in acquittal and glory in the day of judgment.

From hence we learn, 1. That the prospects of those who cover their sins, either from themselves or others, is most appalling.

2. That no sinner, however guilty, and depraved, and miserable, need despair, for he may yet be saved.

LXIX. THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH.

ECCLESIASTES ix. 5.

“For the living know that they shall die.”

If there be any truth within the whole range of science, that obtains universal credence, and shines with equal lustre to the savage and the sage, it is the sentiment recorded in the text; “the living know that they shall die.” Go where you will, however remote the clime, however barbarous the inhabitants, you will find no people devoid of this knowledge; and, considering how universally it prevails, and what evidences there are for its truth, we should almost deem it unnecessary for a preacher to make it the subject of discussion from the pulpit: but the most common truths are usually the most important; and not unfrequently the most neglected; and though “the living know that they shall die,” yet how little practical influence does this sentiment produce; how few prepare for death! This is our only apology for introducing so common a subject to your notice; we will therefore explain,

I. THE AWFUL DECLARATION IN THE TEXT. In doing this, we must chiefly direct our attention to the inquiry; ‘what is it to die?’ But here, alas, our knowledge is exceedingly defective, and, of course, our definition must be very imperfect. Death is not the extinction of our being; and to die is not to terminate our existence. The exalted station of man, the surprising powers,—and vast capacities of his soul,—his inextinguishable thirst for happiness,—the fears of infidels,—and the hopes of Christians,—are presumptive evidences of man’s immortality; but we have positive proofs,—the Scriptures speak of another world;—that after death there is a judgment;—that man possesses a principle unassailable by death, and that eternal consciousness is his unalienable right. There are three views of death: we will consider, 1. *Death in the pains it inflicts.* Troops of malignant diseases attend the king of terrors;—the stone racks,—fevers burn,—consumptions waste,—plagues depopulate,—and disorders of every class attack the human frame, Isa. xxxviii. 13; Matt. viii. 6; Acts ii. 24. 2. *Death*

in the change it produces. The withering of the grass,—the fading of the flower, the fleeing of the shadow, and the vanishing of the vapour, are used to illustrate it. O what an awful and indescribable change death produces! a change of *residence*,—from a world of shadows, to a region of realities; of *companions*, from the society of mortals, dwelling in houses of clay, to associate with disembodied spirits; of *work*,—from the toils and occupations of bodily labour, to employments wholly spiritual and intellectual. But chiefly, death introduces a change in our *mode of existence*, our *feelings*, and our *sensibilities*. The food we eat, and the air we respire, are necessary to our present mode of existence; but after death we shall live in a way now totally unknown. Our *feelings* are now dependent on our senses; our eyes affect our hearts; but in eternity, we shall see, hear, and feel; but how,—who can describe? 3. *Death in the dissolution that it effects.* The body and soul are now linked together more closely than any wedded pair; how tender the union that subsists between them; but how mysterious! Death dissolves that union, the silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl broken; the soul escapes, and heaven or hell receives its new possessor; the body, like a house without an inhabitant, falls into ruins, and the particles of matter which composed it hasten to their kindred elements. Let us notice,

II. THE EVIDENCES WE HAVE OF ITS TRUTH. “The living know,” &c. From what sources is that knowledge derived?

1. *The Bible declares we shall die.* Gen. iii. 19; 2 Sam. xiv. 14; Eccles. xii. 7; Heb. ix. 27.

2. *Experience teaches us that we shall die.* The harbingers of death have already laid siege to our earth-born citadel; the foe is far in advance to meet us: many of us feel that we are not now what we once were; the roses that bloomed in our cheeks are faded; the sprightliness that beamed in our eye is extinguished; the health that braced our frame is fled; the keepers of the house already begin to tremble, and the strong men to bow themselves; the almond tree flourishes, and the daughters of music are brought low.

3. *Facts, the most incontrovertible, testify that we shall die.* Look back on the unnumbered millions of mankind that have existed in the world; the long line of Adam’s sons, the mighty monarchs of the earth, the young, the old, the serious, or the

gay, where are they now? They were once engaged in scenes of social mirth, or high festivity; they chanted to the sound of the viol and the harp; the tabret and the pipe were in their feasts; they had the same fond attachments, and endearing sympathies, that we now have; but alas! they are quenched in death; and the same power that laid them low, will ere long attack us, and perhaps at a moment when we least expect it.

4. *The state of the world serves to convince us that we shall die.* All that live tend to death. View the progress of vegetation, see the rising blade, the ripening ear, and then the dying stalk, sinking to the earth from whence it sprang. Survey animal nature.

“ Brutes soon their zenith reach, and soon decline,
And lend their carcasses to mend the soil.
Man’s make encloses the sure seeds of death.
Life feeds the murderer: ingrate! he thrives
On her own meal, and then his nurse devours.”

III. DRAW SOME PRACTICAL INFERENCES FROM IT.

1. Since the living know that they shall die, and death is so abhorrent to our feelings; let us learn to transfer our hatred from the effect to the cause. Death is but the passive effect of a widely desolating cause; that cause is sin, Rom. v. 12, and vi. 23.

2. Since we know that we shall die, we may see the extreme folly of worldly anxiety, and carking care. If this world were our perpetual residence, then our wisdom might be to get wealth, and heap up riches; but as we *must* die, and can carry nothing with us, to direct all our efforts to the accumulation of property, is a species of folly for which I cannot find a name.

3. Since we know that we shall die, let us labour to prepare for death: “We have all sinned,” and to die without repentance is to perish, Luke xiii. 3. “God hath concluded all in unbelief,” and to die without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is to be damned, Mark xvi. 16. We are all naturally unholy, and have desperately wicked hearts; and unless we are “born again,” and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and perfect holiness in the fear of God, we can never enter the kingdom of heaven; and as we know not the day of our death, we have no time for delay.

4. Since we know that we shall die, let us make the best use of life we can, live to God, and live to do good, that we may be enabled to say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

BETA.

LXX. YOUNG PERSONS EXHORTED TO REMEMBER THEIR CREATOR.

ECCLESIASTES xii. 1.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

SOLOMON was a wise preacher; he sought out acceptable words, and taught the people knowledge. The text may be regarded as a part of one of the last sermons which he preached;—a sermon descriptive of the infinities of age, and the mortality of man;—a sermon embellished by the most significant figures;—in which the human body is allegorically compared to a house; the most active parts of it are personified as so many attendants, by whom the several employments belonging to the house are devised. To prepare mankind for the evils of age, and the attacks of death, the important admonition which we have chosen for our present meditation is introduced; "Remember now," &c. We will consider,

I. THE DUTY HERE ENJOINED. In this we have the *object*, and the *act* of remembrance; the *object* is our *Creator*. This supposes,

1. That there was a period when we had no being; had we always been in existence, we could have had no *Creator*; but on the limited period of mortal life, both as it regards its commencement and close, the Scriptures are plain and explicit. Job viii. 9; Psalm xxxix. 5; James iv. 14.

2. We have a *Creator*, and therefore did not make ourselves; could we have given ourselves existence, the duty enjoined in the text would have referred only to ourselves; but no being

can make itself, as that would suppose it acted prior to its existence, which is a manifest contradiction.

3. Our *Creator* is God; this is one of the first truths of revealed religion, Gen. i. 27, and vi. 7; Deut. iv. 32; Mal. ii. 10.

Secondly, The act of remembrance; this term, "Remember," is of very extensive import, and signifies the whole of what we owe to God. The inspired writers frequently express our duty to God, by some religious act, or pious principle; by the fear of God; or the love of God; here, by the remembrance of God. To "remember our Creator," implies,—1. A previous knowledge of him. To know God absolutely is impossible; and had not our Creator condescended to reveal himself to us, we could have had no conceptions even of his existence; but he has made himself known unto us by the *works of his hands*, Psalm xix. 1; Rom. i. 20;—by the *acts of his Providence*, Ps. civ. 27, 28; Matt. x. 30; Acts xvii. 28. But more especially, by the *manifestations of his grace*, Exod. xxxiv. 6. As a God of grace, he pardons our sins,—renews our hearts,—and saves our souls; and to know him in this character, is to have a consciousness that he has actually done this for us. This knowledge can be obtained only by a Divine influence, Matt. xi. 27, and xvi. 17. "To remember our Creator," implies, the frequent recollection and actual consciousness of his Divine presence; to set the Lord always before us, to stay our minds upon him, and to consider him as a Being essentially present in all places. This remembrance should be, 1. *Reverential*; his eternal Godhead, terrible justice, and wonderful acts, should inspire us with the most profound sentiments of veneration. 2. *Affectionate*; his infinite love in the gift of his Son, and his amazing mercy in pardoning sin, should lead us to remember him with feelings the most ardent, and inviolable attachment. 3. *Operative*; we should evince that we do remember him, by shunning all that he abhors, and following all that he enjoins.

II. THE PECULIAR PERIOD WHEN THIS DUTY IS TO BE PRACTISED;—"Now, in the days of thy youth."

1. We should remember our Creator in the days of our youth, because he is the most worthy object for our remembrance; and that which is most worthy has the first and highest

claims upon our attention. Our Creator unites in himself an assemblage of all possible perfections;—unsearchable wisdom,—infinite power,—inviolable truth, boundless mercy,—essential goodness,—and glorious holiness. We see much in the wonders of creation to astonish us, much in the beauties of nature to charm us; but all that we behold can no more be compared to the ineffable glories of our Creator, than the twinkling of a taper can be likened to the blaze of the meridian sun.

2. We should remember our Creator now, in the days of our youth, because such a remembrance, at this time, is peculiarly acceptable to God. O how lovely is youthful piety! Under the law, the first-fruits, and the first-born, were God's sole property; and the buds of being, and the earliest blossoms of youth, are the sweetest incense and the most acceptable sacrifice that we can offer to our Creator; and shall we neglect these offerings? Shall we refuse to render to God the first fruits of our existence? To discover how amiable early piety is in the sight of God, we need only refer to the testimonies of the Bible; Joseph “remembered his Creator in the days of his youth,” and “his master saw that the Lord was with him,” Gen. xxxix. 3. Solomon, when yet *a little child*, as he calls himself, loved the Lord, 1 Kings iii. 7. Abijah came to his grave in peace, because he had “some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel,” 1 Kings xiv. 13. *Josiah*, while he was “yet young, began to seek after the God of David” his father, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. *Daniel*, and his three companions, were eminent for early piety, and how remarkably God preserved them, we are not now to learn. *John* was the youngest of all the disciples, and Jesus loved him peculiarly, John xxi. 20. *Timothy* knew the Holy Scriptures from a child. 2 Tim. iii. 15.

3. We should be excited to comply with the requisition in the text, because of the comparative ease with which it may be performed. Forgetfulness of God is natural to man, “God is not in all his thoughts,” Job viii. 13; Psalm ix. 17,—x. 4; and whenever we begin to remember our Creator, we must necessarily meet with difficulties; but in youth our understandings are more vigorous, our hearts are more soft, our memories more retentive, our consciences more susceptible; and if ever the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light, it is in the days of our youth. In declining age the heart becomes hard

and unfeeling; the will perverse and obstinate; the habits rooted and inveterate; and the difficulty of turning to God almost insurmountable.

4. We should remember our Creator now, because the present is the only certain time we can command for doing it; the past is gone, the future may never be ours: thousands younger than we are die daily; the work we have to do is most important, and should we continue to neglect it, ruin, irreparable and eternal ruin, must seize us.

5. We should remember our Creator now, *from principles of justice*: He is our Creator, and therefore justly claims the whole of our service. *From principles of gratitude*: We owe our all to him; he remembered us in our low estate; he still remembers us; on the wings of every hour we read his patience. O what a mighty debt of gratitude is due to him! *From principles of self-interest*: To remember our Creator is the way to true wisdom, substantial honour, and unfading happiness. To forget our Creator is the way to misery and hell. You, young people, are you remembering your Creator? Is he not worthy of your remembrance?—Yes; but your pleasures and your amusements engage your attention. O give your hearts to God, and do it now. The address in the text is *personal*, and demands immediate attention. Some of my hearers have passed the morning of their youth,—but have you remembered your Creator? Do you *now* remember him? Soon he will call you to an account for your conduct, and if you do not remember him so as to get an interest in his mercy, he will ere long vex you in his wrath, and chasten you in his sore displeasure.

BETA.

LXXI. THE FEAST FOR ALL PEOPLE.

ISAIAH XXV. 6, 7.

“And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.”

WE find David observing in his thanksgivings to God, “He hath remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever.” This acknowledgement, though it at first particularly referred to the case of the Israelites, is equally applicable to all mankind, and should be adopted by us with feelings of cordial gratitude.

Our state by nature is a low estate, being a state of deep *declension*, for we are fallen far from God, and from original righteousness. It is a state of *wretched subjection*; for we are under the dominion of Satan, sin, and death. And it is a state of *gloomy prospects*; for we are heirs of sorrow in this world, and of eternal torment in the next.

But God hath remembered us in mercy. This is evident from the advent of his Son;—“Through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us,” Luke i. 78. And it is farther evident, from this gracious promise in our text,—“And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast,” &c. Here we find the promise of a feast,—a feast made by God,—a feast furnished with the very best provisions,—a feast made for all people,—and consequently, a feast in which we have an undoubted interest. Let us therefore consider. The feast here promised and described,—And the benefits resulting from attendance at it.

I. THE FEAST HERE PROMISED AND DESCRIBED. In considering this, our text leads us to observe particularly,

1. *The place where God engages to make his feast.* “And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make a feast.” By this mountain is certainly meant the church of God upon earth;

composed of his penitent, believing, grateful, and obedient subjects. This collective body, or community of God's people, is called by Moses, "the mount of the Lord," Num. x. 33. It is called by David, God's holy hill;—"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" Psalm xv. 1. It is called by Isaiah, God's holy mountain;—"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord," Isaiah xi. 9. And it is called by St. Paul, Mount Zion,—"But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God," Heb. xii. 22. From these and other Scriptures, it appears that the term, mountain, is employed, both by way of allusion to Jerusalem, where God's acceptable worship was formerly established; and as an instructive metaphor. For the church of God on earth, like a mountain, is *generally conspicuous*; it cannot be hid, Matt. v. 14. It is seen by *God*, with gracious complacency, Psalm xxxiii. 18, and cxlvii. 11. It is seen by *angels*, with joy, Luke xv. 10: and affectionate care, Ps. xci. 11, 12. It is seen by ungodly *men*, with avowed contempt, 1 John iii. 1; Lam iv. 2. It is seen by *devils*, with envy and malice, 1 Peter v. 8; Rev. xii. 12. They envy the honours of this mountain they hate its Sovereign; and they are manifestly opposed to its government. Hence, like a mountain, *it is peculiarly exposed to storms*. To storms of *persecution* from the wicked, Matt. vii. 25; 2 Tim. iii. 12. And to storms of *temptation* from Satan, Luke xxii. 31; 1 Peter i. 6; Rev. xii. 15. But notwithstanding those hostile assaults, like a mountain, *it remains immoveably secure*, Ps. cxxv. 1. For God is engaged by promise to keep it, Isaiah xxvii. 3. He is always present to keep it, Ps. xlv. 1—7, and xlviii. 3. And he is ever *watchful* to keep it, Psalm cxxi. 4; 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

"So fix'd, by Providence's hands,
A rock amid the ocean stands;
So bears, without a trembling dread,
The tempest beating on its head;
And with its side repels the wave,
Whose hollow seems a coming grave;
The skies, the deeps, are heard to roar,
The rock stands settled as before."

—and like a mountain, *it is extensively beneficial*. Is a moun-

tain beneficial as a *shelter* from storms? So is the church of God, as a shelter from the frowning judgments of heaven. To those storms the wicked are exposed; but from them they are often preserved by the influence of pious characters, Gen. xviii. 32; Isa. i. 9. Is a mountain beneficial as a general *repository*? Do the treasures of heaven drop on the mountains, accumulate there, and break forth in springs for the benefit of mankind? So "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;" "they lay up sound knowledge, and their lips feed many." "Out of Zion goeth forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," Isaiah ii. 3. The church of God is both the light of the world, and the salt of the earth; and in this mountain God makes the feast. But let us observe,

2. *The feast itself which is here promised*: this is undoubtedly the gospel feast, containing the gracious provision made for our salvation; and which, in the parables of our Lord, is frequently represented as a feast, most probably in allusion to our text. It is called a *marriage feast* made by a certain king for his son, Matt. xxii. 2. Thus it may be denominated with great propriety, because herein a sacred union is proposed between Christ and us; and all who obey the gospel enjoy this union, 2 Cor. xi. 2. It is called a *great supper*, Luke xiv. 16. This it certainly resembles, because of its bidden guests, which are very numerous. "He bade many;" and because of its provisions, which are various, abundant, and free. This leads us to observe,

3. *The provisions with which this feast is furnished*: it is a feast of "fat things full of marrow, of wines on (or from) the lees well refined." The provisions thus described are such as must be carefully selected,—dearly purchased,—supremely excellent,—and highly gratifying. The provisions which answer to this description must be *carefully selected*; this they evidently are, for infinite wisdom is displayed in preparing them, Eph. i. 7, 8. And they are exactly adapted to cases of want and misery. Here is wisdom for the ignorant; righteousness for the guilty; sanctification for the depraved; and redemption for helpless captives, 1 Cor. i. 30. *Dearly purchased*; this these provisions are, for they are purchased by the blood of God manifested in the flesh, Acts xx. 28; 1 Peter i. 18, 19. *Supremely excellent*; such are gospel blessings. They excel all those

of former dispensations, as much as the brightness of the sun excels that of the moon, and the morning twilight, 2 Cor. iii. 10; Heb. vii. 19. And *highly gratifying*; such are the enjoyments of Christians. They come to the feast with ardent desire, and remain delightfully satisfied, Psalm lxiii. 1. 5; and lxxxix. 15, 16. Such enjoyments render it interesting to observe,

4. *The guests for whom this feast is provided*;—"for all people." This implies, that *all mankind need the blessings of the gospel*. We must obtain them here, in order to our eternal salvation, Acts xxvi. 18; Rom. vi. 22.—That those blessings must be *applied for, to be obtained*. Those who will not come to the feast shall never enjoy its benefits, Luke xiv. 24; Heb. xii. 25. We should come now, Luke xiv. 17. And come as Christ requires: see Matt. v. 3, 4, 6.—That those blessings are *attainable by all who come for them*. For all such are encouraged by God's promises, Isa lv. 1; Matt. xi. 28; Rev. iii. 20. For the farther encouragement of all gospel penitents, let us consider,

II. THE BENEFITS WHICH RESULT FROM ATTENDANCE AT THIS FEAST. These we find are great and various. As,

1. *The removal of darkness*. "He will destroy in this mountain, the face," &c. The covering or vail is *ignorance* of divine things; Isa. lx. 2; 2 Cor. iv. 4. But it shall be removed by divine *illumination*. Prov. i. 23; Eph. v. 14.

2. *Conquers over death*. He will swallow up death in victory, By raising you to *spiritual life*, John v. 25; Rom. vi. 4—13; Eph. ii. 1.—By exempting you from *eternal death*, John viii. 51; and iii. 16; Rev. xx. 6.—By divesting natural death of its *sting*, 1 Cor. xv. 55—57.—And, finally, by redeeming you from its *power*, Phil. iii. 21; Hos. xiii. 14.

3. *Deliverance from sorrow*. "The Lord God will wipe away all tears," &c.—All tears of *guilty distress*; by assurance of pardon, Ps. cxvi. 8; Matt. v. 4;—All tears of *suffering mortality*; by taking you to paradise. Rev. xxi. 4; and vii. 14—17.

4. *Justification from reproach*. "And the rebuke," &c. He will justify you from the reproach of *hypocrisy*; by open applause, Matt. xxv. 21; Ps. xxxviii. 5, 6,—From the reproach of *meanness*; by heavenly glory, Matt. xxv. 34; and xiii. 43.

—From the reproach of *melancholy* ; by heavenly felicity, Isa. xxxv. 10.—And from the reproach of *folly* ; by the rewards of wisdom." Psalm cxi. 10 ; Prov. iii. 35.

APPLICATION :

1. *On coming to this feast as Christ commands you, confidently expect what he promises.* For the feast is for *all* ; and its blessings are *free*. Rev. xxii. 17.

2. *When received at this feast, let your deportment be answerable to your entertainment.* Be *humble* ; for you are dependent pensioners on the bounty of God, 1 Cor. iv. 7. Be *thankful* ; for your enjoyments are great, Psalm cxxvi. 3. Be *charitable* ; and employ your influence among all your connections, that they may be induced to partake with you, 2 Kings, vii. 9 ; Psalm xxxiv. 3—8.

ALPHA.

LXXII. THE BOOK OF THE LORD.

ISAIAH xxxiv. 16.

"Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read."

THE text occurs nearly at the close of one of the most awfully sublime chapters that the language of man ever uttered, or the pen of inspiration ever wrote. A chapter in which JEHOVAH is represented as clothing himself with the garment of vengeance, and coming out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquities ; and a chapter, in which we not only discover the indignation of God displayed against sinners, so as utterly to affect their destruction ; but where the very land that had nursed them in their crimes is made a standing monument of Divine vengeance. Can any thing within the whole compass of human language be more awful than the descriptions in verses 9—16 ? It is not now necessary to say when these prophecies were fulfilled, or to what particular country they referred : what we have at present to regard is, the advice in the text ; and here let us,

I. NOTICE THE OBJECT TO WHICH OUR ATTENTION IS DIRECTED,—THE BOOK OF THE LORD. This phrase primarily meant the prophetic writings ; but since the canon of Scripture has been filled up, we understand by the “book of the Lord,” the whole Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments : these are called, “the book of the Lord,”

1. *Because they were inspired by the Lord*, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. We infer this,—from their wonderful preservation,—from the exact fulfilment of the prophecies with which they abound,—from the most stupendous and indisputable miracles recorded in them,—from the grand and elevated subjects on which they treat,—and especially from the moral influence of their doctrines in the salvation of mankind.

2. *They abound with the most correct and sublime descriptions of the Lord.* One of the ancients said, “The Bible is the history of God.” It describes the nature of God,—what he is in himself, and what he is to us,—what he has been doing, and what he will do. It records the terrible acts of his justice,—the grand displays of his mercy,—his inviolable faithfulness, immaculate purity, and immutable goodness. There is scarcely a question which a serious man may be disposed to urge relative to the Divine Being, which cannot be solved from the Old and New Testaments.

3. *They are sanctioned by the Lord, and he has set his seal to their truth*, Isaiah lv. 10, 11 ; Rom. i. 16 ; 1 Thess. ii. 13. Oh, what great and glorious success attends the doctrines contained in the Bible, when preached in their purity ! How many blind eyes are opened ! How many hard hearts softened ! How many inveterate prejudices subdued ! How many wanderers reclaimed ! How many penitents cheered ! And how many immortal souls made wise unto salvation by the Holy Scriptures !

4. *They lead to the Lord.* They find us out in our state of estrangement and alienation from God ; they teach us the way of access unto God, by the blood of the atonement ; they mark the steps by which the prodigal returns to his father ; they encourage him by promises, and urge him by threatenings ; and their most obvious tendency and design is to lead us “to the rock that is higher than” ourselves.

II. ILLUSTRATE THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH WE ARE TO SEEK OUT OF THE BOOK OF THE LORD AND READ.

1. *To gain instruction.* The Bible is a book of knowledge. All the streams of sacred instruction, which have been flowing in every direction through all the Christian world, and fertilizing the waste and desolate places of the earth, have arisen from this source. Do we pant for knowledge? Here it spreads its ample page;—

“’Tis revelation satisfies all doubts,
And solves all mysteries except its own;
And so illuminates the path of life,
That fools discover it and stray no more.”

A Christian with a Bible in his hand resembles a man standing on the elevated summit of a mountain, “where ether pure surrounds him, and Elysian prospects rise.” The dark clouds that hung over the past are all dissipated, and he views the birth of time, the formation of the globe, the origin of evil, and the long train of miracles, prophecies, and wonders, with which the Old Testament abounds. Nor is he less favoured in looking through the bright vista of the future years.

2. *To gain examples.* The Bible is a book of models; here we see religion enlivened and embodied. The precepts of the Gospel describe what men ought to be, but in the living characters we see what they were; and there is not a single virtue that can adorn human nature, but what has been exemplified in some living characters, recorded in “the book of the Lord;” such as faith in Abraham, meekness in Moses, patience in Job, &c.

3. *To gain excitements.* The Bible is a book of motives. Knowledge and practice do not always harmonize. Men know much; but how few live up to what they know! There are no motives equal to those which the Bible presents. Can love allure us? Here is love “no where to be found less than divine.” Can terror awe us? Here are the terrors of the Lord most awfully displayed in the punishments inflicted on the ungodly. Oh, what motives does “the book of the Lord” display! addressed to the understanding, to the conscience, and to the heart.

4. *To gain encouragements.* The Bible is a book of promises and consolations : they suit every case, meet every emergency, redress every grievance, scatter every doubt, and heal every wound ; they are pure in their source, satisfying in their nature, and perpetual in their duration.

III. OFFER A FEW THOUGHTS AS TO THE MANNER HOW WE SHOULD SEEK OUT OF THE BOOK OF THE LORD AND READ.

1. *We should do it with deep seriousness and holy awe resting upon our minds.* The very thought that we are about to consult the oracles of eternal truth, which came forth from God, and serve to describe his nature, ought to repress every feeling of levity, and every disposition contrary to serious godliness. Were God again upon earth in human form, and were we to consult him on the great business of our salvation, who can doubt but what we should do it seriously ?—So read his word.

2. *We should “ seek out of the book of the Lord, and read,” with all the attention of which we are capable.* “ Search,” said our Saviour, “ the Scriptures.” This is a significant word, and is a metaphor taken from miners, who dig deep, and search for metals in the bowels of the earth. “ The book of the Lord ” has a rich vein of heavenly wisdom running through it, whose merchandise is better than silver ; but this treasure lies deep, and superficial observers never perceive it : while we read let us seek,—bend the whole force of our minds,—call in our attention,—and repress every wandering thought.

3. *We should do it frequently.* If we cannot spare hours to do it, let us snatch moments ; and if we cannot peruse many chapters, let us read single verses, and treasure them up in our memories. “ Thy word have I hid in my heart,” Psalm cxix. 11. Let our memories be sacred repositories for the words of God.

4. *We should do it with much prayer.* While you read, pray—pray for Divine illumination. “ Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ;” we need that same teaching, to understand what they wrote. Psalm cxix. 18 ; Prov. i. 23.

5. *We should do it practically.* Let us read, not merely to know, but to practise ; all knowledge should be influential. “ If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” James i. 25.

Infer,

1. *The greatness of our privileges.* We live in a land of Bibles, we have “the book of the Lord;” and by the help of Sunday schools, &c. all may read.

2. *The greatness of our obligations,*—to know, love, praise, and obey God.

3. *The greatness of our guilt,* if we abuse our privileges, and violate our obligations to God.

BETA.

LXXIII. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRUSTING IN THE CREATURE AND THE CREATOR.

JEREMIAH xvii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

“Cursed is the man that trusteth in man,” &c.

MAN is not independent. He feels that he cannot support and defend himself, nor derive complete happiness from his own resources. The Creator and the creature present themselves to his view, both proffer their aid,—both claim his confidence. Unhappily, he too often relies on the creature, and reaps the result of his folly in bitter disappointment and irretrievable ruin. But when he reposes on his God, he obtains the Divine blessing and support, and gathers the fruit of his confidence in present satisfaction and endless felicity. These sentiments are illustrated by the text, which emphatically displays,

I. THE FOLLY AND EVIL OF TRUSTING IN MAN. “Cursed,” &c. We are not to imagine that such a reasonable confidence in human ability and integrity, as is requisite for the purposes of civil intercourse and business, is condemned: without this the frame of society would be dissolved, and men would become savages. But “to trust in man,” in the sense of our text, is to expect that from creatures, which can only come from the Creator: to confide in them, not as mere instruments, but as efficient causes; to look *to them* so as to *look off from God*; to cleave to them so as to depart from him. To “make flesh our arm,”

is to confide in human wisdom, power, riches, &c. for protection from evil, or for the attainment of any proposed advantage. This practice spreads through all the gradations of society,—through every department of life ; kings and subjects,—ministers and people,—parents and children,—buyers and sellers,—rich and poor,—formalists and pharisees,—would furnish striking illustrations. But without further detail, let us remark that this practice is,

1. *Idolatrous in its principle.* It is a “departing in heart” from the living God, and putting the creature in the place of the Creator, which is the essence of idolatry. Whatever a man confides in for protection and happiness, is unquestionably *his* God. Let all *covetous, ambitious, and licentious* persons consider this,—they all “make flesh their arm,” and “their hearts depart from the Lord.”

2. *Groveling in its aim.* It looks no higher than present good, and things altogether unworthy of an immortal spirit. God, the proper and adequate good of the soul,—the noblest object to which it can aspire,—is neglected and shunned ; the sinner’s heart departs from him, to pursue wind and chaff, and vanity.

3. *Unreasonable in its foundation.* It is built upon the most absurd and extravagant of all suppositions, viz. that the creature can supply the place of the Creator : indeed it supposes that man can do what God cannot.

4. *Destructive in its issue.* “Cursed is the man,” &c.—“He shall be like the heath in the desert,”—worthless, sapless, fruitless ; “he shall not see when good cometh,”—shall not enjoy it ; “but he shall inhabit the parched places,” &c. He shall prosper in nothing. His soul shall be disconsolate, like a man banished to some desolate spot, amidst burning sands and trackless wilds, where all is melancholy, dreary, and waste, and where he at length expires through famine. These expressions clearly mark *the frustration of his projects and hopes.* He finds the creature a broken reed, which pierces him to the heart by bitter disappointment. The cisterns he has hewn out are “broken cisterns,” &c. “Cursed,” &c.—*The melancholy state of his soul.* “He seeth not when good cometh,”—really enjoys nothing. He may affect a smile, but he carries about a “heart of tears.”—*The unhappy end of his career.* As a man must

inevitably die of famine who is exiled to a completely barren wilderness; so he, continuing in this criminal alienation from God, must certainly perish to all eternity. View his abandonment at death,—contemplate his wretchedness for ever.

II. THE WISDOM AND BENEFIT OF TRUSTING IN THE LORD. “Blessed is the man,” &c. Instead of relying upon his own understanding, the sagacity of others, or the maxims of the world, he confides in Divine *wisdom* for constant direction and guidance. Instead of trusting to the deceitful engagements of men, he relies upon the unfailing promises of God. Instead of seeking to human expedients, and depending upon worldly resources for happiness, he seeks his happiness in God: his health, life, and outward circumstances, he confides to Divine Providence, using all proper and appointed means: his soul he confides to Christ for pardon, purity, consolation, support, and everlasting felicity. In short, Jehovah is his **HOPE**. He seeks and expects his all from him. To know, love, and enjoy him,—behold his chief good,—the object of his hopes,—his highest and ultimate end. Now this conduct is the complete contrast of the other.

1. *It is pious in its principles.* It refers all to God; it exalts him in the soul, and renders him his just honour. The believer acknowledges his entire dependence upon, and obligations to, Jehovah; his heart cleaves to him alone, and bows to his government; the Divine Majesty sits enthroned in his affections; and Christ, in whom all the fulness of godhead resides, is truly his “all in all,” his “wisdom, righteousness,” &c.

2. *Elevated in its aim.* “Whose *hope* the Lord is.” It grasps at nothing less than the INFINITE. Did a man aim at universal empire,—at the conquest, possession, and government, not only of the earth, but of all the numberless globes that roll in the heavens; vast as such an ambition might be, it would be mean compared to the Christian’s views; he aims at the possession and enjoyment of God!

3. *Rational in its foundation.* The Christian has the highest reason and fullest warrant for trusting in God. God has commanded it in the strongest terms, and all his attributes are so many motives to obedience. Hence, however vast his expectations, there is nothing extravagant or visionary in them, while founded upon the perfections and declarations of God.

4. *Glorious in its issue.* "Blessed is the man," &c. "For he shall be like a tree," &c. This elegant and figurative language denotes,—*The success of his enterprizes.* His hopes and efforts, instead of being blasted, shall always succeed; "whatsoever he doeth shall prosper;" he is "blessed of the Lord."—*The settled comfort and satisfaction of his soul.* Like a firmly rooted tree in a rich well-watered soil, he shall abide in peace, while the richest consolations shall felicitate his heart.—*The loveliness and dignity of his character.* Like a tree covered with constant foliage, blossoms, and fruit; his character and profession shall bloom with unfading beauty, and increasing attractions.—*The usefulness of his life.* "He shall not cease from bearing fruit." His whole life shall abound in benevolent and holy tempers, words, and actions. These he shall not cease to yield, even in affliction, old age, and the decay of nature.—*His eternal felicity.* He may indeed be transplanted from the vineyard below to that above; but there he shall blossom afresh, and bear the fruits of immortality.

Application :—

1. It is a great mistake to suppose the rich and gay happy; the poor and pious miserable.

2. An entire renunciation of creature confidence, and an unserved dependence on God, can alone secure the Divine favour and our own felicity.

DELTA.

LXXIV. SCRIPTURAL CONVERSION.

EZEKIEL xi. 19, 20.

"And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."

THAT opinions are often formed and acted on without due examination, is too evident to admit of denial, or to require proof. And this happens, not in trifling things only, but in matters of highest moment. Thus religion is neglected and

despised as a *gloomy* subject; and other books are preferred to the Bible, by those who seek *excitement*, and therefore read only, or chiefly, such things as they think are calculated to awaken the passions, and to keep them in play. Would such persons deign, in proper temper, to peruse the sacred book, they would find that it challenges their *admiration*; not by the vigour of genius and grasp of intellect exhibited in some extraordinary piece of human painting or machinery, but by the infinite power and wisdom displayed in a *real creation* of "the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them," Gen. ii. 1, with all the varieties of their ever-changing glory, and all the nicely complicated mechanism, and all the laws, both of matter and of mind, by which the whole is kept in constant operation:—it challenges their *pity*; not by the distress of an *individual*, who has been seduced from the path of virtue; but by the case of a *world*, involved in infamy and ruin;—their *love* and *gratitude*; not to an object who may have showed them some trifling attentions, and have made some trifling sacrifices on their account; but to one who unites in himself every excellence; and who flung himself into the jaws of death, to snatch them from death eternal;—their *fears*, by a representation, not of enchantments, dungeons, &c.; but of the crashing and convulsions of dissolving nature,—the groans of the dying, and the agonies of the damned,—blackness of darkness,—fire unquenchable,—infernals in all their fury,—and hell in all its horrors: while it offers to their *hopes* the prospect, not of an earthly paradise, but a celestial "inheritance," containing every thing noble and delightful, which man can enjoy, or God himself bestow. Our text justifies these observations. It shows us the Most High, "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working," melting with *pity* over our *miserable* and *fearful* state; *generously*, of his "kindness and love," proposing our relief, and thus affording solid ground of hope: in a word, it is a promise of that important blessing, *conversion*; of which it leads us to consider the *nature*, *necessity*, and *happy results*.

I. THE NATURE OF CONVERSION. Conversion in every case means a change. In the present instance our text teaches us, that it includes a change of *spirit*, of *heart*, and of *conduct*. It includes,

1. A change of *spirit*. "I will put a *new spirit* within you."

Accustomed as we are to distinguish between “our earthly house of this tabernacle,” and the *spirit* which inhabits it, these words might almost seem to intimate something like a destruction of *identity*. The change, however, is not a natural one, which *affects the substance*, but an intellectual and moral one, which affects the *powers* and *propensities* of the soul. This *strong* expression serves to denote the *greatness* of the change; which our Lord also represents as a *new birth*, John iii. 7; and his apostles as a “being *transformed* by the renewing of the mind;” and even as a *new creation*, in which “all things are become new,” Rom. xii. 2; 2 Cor. v. 17. The converted man has *new perceptions*; formerly he had *closed his eyes*,—was “blind.”—Satan had *blinded* him, (Matt. xiii. 15; 2 Peter i. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 4;) but now his “eyes are enlightened;” and he sees *himself* as a sinner *ruined*, and *redeemed*; sees the *glory of God* in the *face of Jesus Christ*; and *his will* in Christ Jesus concerning him, 2 Cor. iv. 6.; 1 Thess. v. 9—18. He has a *new understanding*. The wicked are said to have the understanding *darkened*, and even to be *without* understanding, Eph. iv. 18; Rom. i. 31. But now the eyes of his understanding being enlightened, he knows what is the hope of his Christian calling, &c., Eph. i. 18, 19. Hence follows a *new judgment*. Time was when he judged that God was “a hard master,” and said, ‘There can be no harm’ in this indulgence, or the other amusement, &c. &c.: now he decides that *actions* are to be praised or blamed according to their *motives*; that God’s service is man’s interest; and that “every weight,” as well as the “besetting sin,” should be cast away, &c. Finally he has new *dispositions*, *affections*, &c. He *hates* sin, because of its *turpitude*; *loves holiness*, for its excellence; *desires* heaven for its holy company, employment, &c.; and has new *principles*, *motives*, *ends*, and means.

2. A change of *heart*. “I will take away the *stony heart*, and give a *heart of flesh*.” The heart is the seat of affection, and the source of action, Matt. xv. 19, and xii. 34, 35. The stony heart is therefore a monstrous thing. Take a stone in your hand, it is *cold*; apply it to your finger, it is *unyielding*; break it, grind it to powder, it *feels* not; and under all circumstances it *exerts no energies*, and it possesses none. Is your heart alive and warm in the cause of religion? Bring it into con-

tact with *a heart of stone*, and endeavour, by pious converse, to communicate to the stony heart vitality and warmth. You perceive no corresponding *vibration*; you excite no *feeling*; you find about it the *hardness of adamant*, and the *chill of death*. The “heart of flesh” is the opposite of this: *it glows*,—receives good *impressions*,—“*feels* after the Lord,” (Acts xvii. 27.) and *beats* with *holy ardour*, and *prompts* to pious action. Whence follows,

3. A change of *conduct*. “That they may walk in, keep, do, my *statutes*, and my *ordinances*.” The words thus rendered are of very extensive signification: the former is from a root which signifies to describe or define; the latter from one which means to discern, to judge: and they certainly intend whatever rules Divine wisdom has *discerned* or *judged*, and *defined* or *determined*, to be proper for the *regulation* of man’s conduct in *civil*, *domestic*, and *religious* life. They are the statutes and ordinances of *God*, and may not be dispensed with. Hence,

II. THE NECESSITY OF CONVERSION.

1. The change of *heart* and *spirit* just mentioned, is necessary in order to the *change of conduct* required. “I will put a new spirit,” &c., “that they may walk,” &c. Without this, obedience would be, at best, grossly *partial* and *deficient*. It will be deficient, from a *deficiency of power*; a soul not yet converted may be so far enlightened as to approve some things that are excellent; to disapprove of some things sinful; and to form “good resolutions;” which after all fall before the next suitable temptation. So Herod “did many things, and heard John gladly;” and yet, though “exceeding sorry,” he murdered his teacher, Mark vi. 20—27; 2 Tim. ii. 26. It will be deficient also, from a *deficiency of principle*; a person may be *just*, and, in certain cases, *assist charitable institutions*, &c., from a desire of a fair reputation, &c.; or he may be zealous in *religious services*, in which *himself has the lead*; or in the support of his favourite minister, &c., without *intending* to do whatever he does to the *glory of God*. Such a person will not, however, “have respect unto *all* God’s commandments,” Ps. cxix. 6. Such were the pharisees;—such was Jehu; zealous enough when interest and honour were concerned; yet still cleaving to the sins of Jeroboam, 2 Kings x. 16, and

31. These remarks may be illustrated and confirmed by the first clause of our text;—"I will give them *one heart*." This may indeed refer to a *community*, verse xvii. 15; Phil. i. 27. But it also applies to individuals; in which case the *one* heart is opposed to a *double* heart; see 1 Chron. xii. 33; Ps. xii. 2; and implies *purity of intention*, Eph. vi. 5; Matt. vi. 22; *decision of choice*, v. 24.; and *steady consistency of character*. James i. 8.

2. The conversion required is necessary as a *preparative for heaven*; into which, except a man be *born again*, he CANNOT enter, John iii. 3—7. The religion of but too many consists in saying prayers, reading the Scriptures, giving alms, &c. Now, this, although *good in its place*, is only *bodily* service, which *may* be performed by the veriest formalist or hypocrite; and which, *at best*, is to religion, only what the body is to the man; and soon we must leave *the body* and all *this kind of service* behind us; and, of course, if we have no religion *in our souls*, we must go into eternity in a state of destitution, the most *complete* and most *awful* that can be imagined. By way of contrast, consider,

III. THE HAPPY RESULTS OF CONVERSION; here expressed in two relations,—“They shall be *my people*,—I will be *their God*.” Man’s wants and weaknesses lead him to look for foreign help; and his experience shows that he is not formed merely for the solitary contemplation of himself; the ETERNAL graciously offers to become the worthy object of his *firmest trust*, Isa. xxvi. 4; Matt. vi. 31, 32; his *warmest love*, Mark xii. 30; and his *most hearty devotion*, Matt. iv. 10. “I will be their GOD,” and “they shall be *my people*,” in whom I will *dwell*, 2 Cor. vi. 16;—whom I will *direct*, Isa. xlviii. 17,—*defend*, Isa. xlix. 15—26,—*support*, Isa. xli. 10,—*sustain*, 2 Cor. vi. 18,—*sanctify*, Ezek. xxxvi. 25; Col. i. 12,—and *glorify*, Matt. xxv. 34, and 46

To the unconverted we would say,—the change required is *radical*;—do not take a change of manners, creed, mode of worship, &c., as a substitute. It is *indispensable*; do not rest without it. *It is attainable*;—do not despair. The cause is sufficient for the effect. He is *omnipotent*, who says, “*I will do it.*”

To the converted;—remember your *duty*, and shew your-

selves his “*peculiar people* zealous of good works.” Remember your *privileges*, and *value* and *improve* them. “Their rock is not as our rock; our enemies themselves being judges.”

ZETA.

LXXV. THE FOUNTAIN OPENED.

ZACHARIAH xiii. 1.

“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.”

AN inspired apostle assures us, that, to Christ, “give all the prophets witness;” and their various testimonies concerning him are highly descriptive of his character and work, as the Redeemer and Saviour of his people. He is distinctly represented by a rich variety of metaphors and figures, which strikingly illustrate the nature of his offices, and the operations of his grace. He is the *Sun of Righteousness*, to enlighten our minds,—an *infallible physician*, to heal the maladies of our souls,—a *spiritual refiner*, to purify our hearts,—and an *inexhaustible fountain*, to supply all our hearts by “the exceeding riches of his grace.” He possesses an infinite plenitude of blessings, which he is ever ready to communicate to perishing sinners. In the text, the prophet evidently testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow: prophetically anticipating the personal manifestation of the Messiah, and the unspeakable benefits resulting to mankind from his atoning sacrifice, he exclaims with holy joy and gratitude, “In that day,” &c. Let us pray that we may comprehend the import, and realize the truth of these words, while we consider,

I. THE FOUNTAIN THAT IS OPENED. The term *fountain* is a metaphor, and is used in the text to represent the mediatorial character of Christ, as the *source* and *medium* of salvation

to the human race. The figure is highly appropriate and instructive. "A fountain opened," implies,

1. *The plenitude of Divine grace.* It is not a *wasting stream*, that soon exhausts its store; but a *never-failing fountain*, ever flowing in plenteous supplies for every demand. The LORD JEHOVAH is emphatically styled, "The fountain of living waters, and the God of all grace." The saving influences of the Holy Ghost are figuratively called *water*;—*water of life*;—and the *washing of regeneration*, John iv. 14; 1 Cor. vi. 11. And the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Author of salvation, graciously exclaims to a perishing world, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." In him there is an unlimited fulness of "grace and truth," Col. i. 19; John i. 16. Millions have been refreshed by this fountain, and still it is undiminished. There is "enough for all, and enough for evermore."

2. *The freeness of Divine grace.* It is not a fountain *sealed up* and *forbidden*; but *freely opened* and *accessible* to all. None are excluded from participating its richest blessings, Rev. xxii. 17. No personal merit, or moral worthiness, is required in its willing recipients. All are invited, and are welcome to drink the living streams of bliss, "without money, and without price." The Saviour will not cast out any that come unto him. He opened a fountain of *life* by his *death*, and in infinite compassion declares, "I will give unto him that is athirst, of the water of life freely. . . . Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Observe,

II. THE PERIOD WHEN IT WAS OPENED. "In that day," &c. When this expression occurs in the prophetic writings, it generally refers to the *actual appearing or spiritual reign* of the Messiah. In this sense we understand it in the text, as referring to Christ's assumption of our nature, and sacrifice for our sins. But we ought to notice respecting this fountain, that,

1. *It was virtually opened in the original scheme of redemption.* According to God's gracious promise to mankind, Christ is called, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." When the counsel of peace was between them both, the covenant of redemption was made in Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and man, Rom. iii. 24—26. This scheme of reconciliation was, in due time, announced to the world; and the

fountain of grace *gradually revealed* and *opened* in the various promises of the Redeemer to the patriarchs, the emblematic shadows of the Mosaic dispensation, and the inspired predictions of the holy prophets. John viii. 56; Rom. iii. 21, 22.

2. *It was actually opened in the mediatorial work of the Redeemer.* When the fulness of time was come, Christ was manifested in the flesh, to accomplish the will of God, and procure the salvation of sinners. He then *fully opened* this fountain, by fulfilling all righteousness in his own person,—becoming the propitiation for our sins,—rising again for our justification,—ascending to heaven to be our Advocate with the Father,—and diffusing an enlarged dispensation of the Holy Ghost. It was ministerially opened in the labours and writings of the apostles, “as ambassadors for Christ,” 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, 30. And it still continues *open*, issuing in copious streams through all the doctrines, promises, and ordinances of the gospel, to satisfy the thirsty souls of them that repent and believe; John vii. 38. Consider,

III. THE PEOPLE TO WHOM IT IS OPENED. “The house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” It is very evident,

1. *This fountain was primarily opened to the Jews.* This is the express declaration of the text. To the *Jews* Christ was promised, and to them he came as his own people according to the flesh. His personal ministry was generally confined to them; and though they crucified him as an impostor, his blood was shed for their sins: and he commanded his apostles to open their commission at Jerusalem, and preach the gospel *first* to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel;” Luke xxiv. 46, 47, &c.

2. *This fountain is now graciously opened to the Gentiles.* The blessings of the Messiah were not to be confined to the Jewish Church.—He was sent “to be a light of the *Gentiles*, and for salvation to the *ends of the earth*.” “By the grace of God he tasted death for every man;” and “his unsearchable riches” are to be preached in “every nation, and to every creature. Jews and Gentiles are equally welcome, for there is now no difference,” Rom. x. 12, 13; Eph. ii. 14—18. Unnumbered millions of Gentiles have proved the cleansing power of this *fountain*, which is *rapidly opening* and *extending* its healing virtues to “every kindred, tongue, and people.” Our text also specifies,

IV. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH IT IS OPENED. It is "for sin and uncleanness." This implies,

1. *A fountain is opened for the expiation of sin.* The death of Christ was a *perfect sacrifice*, by which an *atonement* was made for the sins of mankind. The divine perfections *harmonized*, and a new and living way of salvation opened to fallen sinners, Psalm lxxv. 10; Heb x. 22. *Such an expiation*, was absolutely necessary,—was typified by the Jewish sacrifices,—was announced by the prophets,—and was ultimately accomplished, when Christ "was wounded for our transgressions, and his soul was made an offering for sin," John i. 29; 1 John iv. 10.

2. *A fountain is opened for the destruction of sin.* It must not only be *sacrificially expiated*, but *personally destroyed*: and "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might *destroy* the works of the devil." He effects this *destruction* by the merit of his death, and the operation of his grace, Titus ii. 14. All sin is *moral uncleanness*, and spreads its infectious disease through every power, both of body and soul. The ceremonial purifications under the law were *emblematic* of the *efficacy* of *this fountain*, Heb. ix. 13, 14. "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin," 1 John i. 8, 9. Have we come to this living fountain? It is *open* and *free* for all. "Believe, and be saved." "Come, drink, and thirst no more."

ETA.

LXXVI. REST FOR THE WEARY AND HEAVY LADEN.

MATTHEW xi. 21.

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

THE numerous miracles which our blessed LORD performed, proved that his mission was divine; and the various sermons and parables which he delivered constrained those who heard

him to exclaim, "Never man spake like this man!" Grace was poured into his lips; and in him were accomplished the words of the prophet,—“The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” He warned the unruly, instructed the ignorant, comforted the distressed, and poured the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit. Many were the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; and a few of his discourses have been recorded for the instruction, encouragement, and edification of those upon whom the ends of the world are come. Our text, found in one of these discourses, has ever been salutary to those who have felt distressed on account of their sin; and if there were no other passages of the same complexion in the Bible, this would be sufficient to inspire hope, and to banish despair. The subject connected with these words comprehends,

I. THE PERSONS ADDRESSED; who are described as “labouring and heavy laden.”

1. *They labour.* This expression signifies the act of doing something which requires strong exertion. Many of the Jews laboured hard to recommend themselves to God, by observing various rites and ceremonies, Rom. x. 3. They were required by divine authority to offer a great number of costly sacrifices;—to travel to Jerusalem three times a year to worship God, and to observe various ritual precepts. In the days of our Lord, their teachers bound heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and laid them on their shoulders; and thus the Jewish yoke became intolerably oppressive;—“A yoke,” said St. Peter, “which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.”

The Jews are not the only persons who have laboured to merit heaven, by the performance of what are called religious duties: many who name the name of Christ, and profess to believe the articles of the Christian faith, are not less sanguine in their expectations of being saved by their own endeavours; they toil and labour to cancel the debt which they have contracted, to atone for the sins they have committed; and thus to obtain that heaven, which they are conscious they have forfeited. But Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father,—the only Mediator between God and man,—the only Physician of souls,—the only Saviour of sinners. John xiv. 6; Acts iv. 12; 1 Cor. iii. 11.

2. *They are heavy laden.* They feel the burden of sin, Psa. xxxviii. 4; Isa. xxxviii. 14;—the reproaches of a guilty conscience, Prov. xviii. 14; Acts ii. 37;—the wrath of God abiding on them, Psa. xxxii. 4. Such persons are prepared to receive the blessings of the gospel, Matt. v. 4;—they are the individuals to whom the promises of pardon and salvation are addressed, Isa. lv. 1;—the very characters which Christ came to save. 1 Tim. i. 15; Luke xix. 10. Hence,

II. THE INVITATION GIVEN TO THEM; “Come unto me;” which signifies, that,

1. *We must address Christ in prayer.* Prayer is the desire of the soul expressed to God; it is God’s appointed means, in the use of which he hath engaged to give us whatever we need, Matt. vii. 7. Prayer may be as effectually expressed by the sighs and groans of a broken heart and contrite spirit, as by the most suitable words. This duty is not only easy to perform, but it is indispensably necessary; without prayer we cannot be saved, Ezek. xxxvi. 37; Rom. x. 13. Let us not, however, suppose, that there is any thing meritorious in prayer; our prayers cannot purchase the favour of God, or the remission of sin.

2. *We must come in the exercise of faith.* Unbelief pours contempt on the Saviour, and excludes us from any share in the blessings of salvation; but faith honours God, and secures an interest in all that Jesus has done and suffered for sinners, see 1 Tim. iv. 10; Rom. iv. 5; Acts x. 43, and xiii. 38, 39; Heb. xi. 16. *We must believe that Christ is a suitable Saviour.* Are we ignorant of God, of our duty, and of our privileges? Christ is our wisdom. Are we under guilt and condemnation? Christ is our righteousness. Are we in a state of moral defilement; polluted with sin, and altogether filthy and abominable? Christ is our sanctification, 1 John i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. Our stubborn wills he can subdue,—our defiled consciences he can purge,—our wicked hearts he can cleanse. In coming to Christ, we should keep this in mind; “He is able to save” me; though my sins are ever so numerous, or aggravated, he can pardon them; though my nature is ever so much depraved, he can renew me: see Heb. vii. 25. *We must believe that he is a willing Saviour.* Why should we question his willingness? Did he not voluntarily take our

nature,—endure the contradiction of sinners,—and submit to be condemned, and scourged, and crucified? Every groan he heaved, every tear he shed, every drop of blood he poured out, tells us that his heart is made of tenderness, and that he is full of mercy and of grace. *The text embraces all kinds and degrees of sinners*:—“Come unto me *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden.” Whatever you have been, or whatever you have done, if you only come to the Saviour with a humble, lowly, penitent, and believing heart, he will receive you graciously. *And to whom would you go?* The law condemns you, your own consciences condemn you; you are wretched, Rev. iii. 17. Your repentance, your tears, your prayers, cannot save you; you must come to Christ, or perish. Let me entreat you to make an *early* application to Christ, Heb. iii. 15; 2 Cor. vi. 2, and you shall realize,

III. THE BLESSING PROMISED TO THOSE WHO ACCEPT THE INVITATION. A guilty conscience is compared to a troubled sea, which cannot rest: there is no peace to the wicked; no peace with God,—no peace in the mind. As long as we continue under the guilt of sin, and the curse of the law, and the wrath of God, how can we expect to be at rest? That soul must be dreadfully oppressed, and grievously tormented, which has such a load to sustain; but if we accept the Saviour's invitation, he will deliver us from all our perplexing doubts, and from all our tormenting fears.

1. *The cause of misery and distress will be removed.* All the anguish of mind which we ever felt, was the effect of sin; nor is it possible for us to be happy while under the guilt and power of moral evil. Our iniquities must be forgiven,—our persons must be justified,—before we can have peace with God. When the labouring and heavy-laden sinner comes to Christ, believes in him, and receives him in all his saving offices, he obtains the remission of sins, receives the spirit of adoption, and is accepted in the Beloved, Rom. v. 1, 11; Heb. iv. 3. His conscience no longer accuses him, 2 Cor. i. 12;—the law no longer condemns him, Gal. iii. 13; Rom. viii. 1;—the wrath of God no longer oppresses him, Isa. xxxviii. 17, and xii. 1;—he is no longer the slave of sin, Rom. vi. 14, 22; or the captive of Satan, 2 Tim. ii. 26; Col. i. 13; he is saved from the fear of death, and the dread of eternity. *Another cause*

of misery is removed, by the renewal of the mind,—the regeneration of fallen nature ; in consequence of which the evil tempers and dispositions no longer predominate, and distress the soul. See Gal. v. 17—24.

2. *The comforts of religion are communicated.* These are genuine, various, and extensive, Prov. iii. 13—18. Oh, what a change is produced in the views and feelings of a person who is justified freely by Divine grace ! He thinks on the horrible dungeon out of which he has been brought ; he calls to mind the wormwood and the gall,—the guilt and anguish under which he laboured ; and contrasting these with the privileges of his present state, and the glory of his future prospects, he says, or sings, with the Psalmist, (Psa. cxvi. 7—12,) “ Return unto thy rest,” &c.

3. But we shall never realize the full import of the Saviour’s gracious promise, until we enter upon that “ rest which remaineth for the people of God ;” Isaiah lvii. 2 ; Rev. xiv. 13, and xxi. 3, 4.

Let the subject teach,

1. *The self-righteous Pharisee*, who is labouring to merit heaven by his imaginary good works, that such an attempt is foolish and dangerous, and destructive. Rom. iii. 19, 20 ; Matt. v. 20 ; and xxi. 31 ; Isa. l. 11.

2. *The mourning penitent*,—that Christ kindly invites, and is waiting to receive him. 2 Pet. i. 4 ; Isa. lv. 7—9 ; Micah vii. 18, 19.

3. *The soul happily pardoned*,—to be thankful, Psalm cxvi. 12, 13,—to be humble, Ezek. xvi. 63,—to be watchful, 1 Cor. x. 12,—and steadfast, Rev. ii. 10.

THETA.

LXXVII. THE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

MATTHEW xvi. 26.

“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

MAN is a being of a complex nature, consisting of a body, and a soul; of matter and spirit. These opposite qualities are mysteriously combined from the commencement of our existence, till death dissolves the union. The body is *mortal*, and will speedily return to its origin, the dust; but the soul is *immortal*, and shall return to God who gave it. The present life, therefore, is a limited state of probation; and our final destinies are involved in the character we sustain, and the objects we pursue, Gal. vi. 7, 8. Let us then not flatter and deceive ourselves with the fascinating vanities of the world, and neglect the salvation of our souls. Religion is of paramount importance, and invariably secures our best interests; but the world is a mere deception, it dissipates and deludes the mind, but cannot satisfy it. The most extensive worldly portion is lighter than vanity, when compared with the loss of eternal happiness. This is evidently the leading sentiment of the text, which is placed in a very striking light by being expressed in a way of interrogation;—“For what is a man profited?” &c. These solemn and impressive words suggest the following positions for our serious consideration.—We possess immortal souls of infinite value.—Our souls are in imminent danger of being lost.—Nothing can compensate for the loss of the soul.

I. WE POSSESS IMMORTAL SOULS OF INCALCULABLE VALUE. This assertion may be proved, both from reason and Scripture. We are uniformly taught, that there is an *immaterial* spirit in man, *distinct* from the body; and which exists after its dissolution, Job xxxii. 8; Zech. xii. 1; Luke xvi. 19—31. The incomparable worth of the soul appears from,

1. *The nature of its powers.* It is the immediate offspring of God, and was his last and most glorious work of creation. It was made the fairest resemblance of himself, as the express

image of the immortality of his being, and of the perfection of his nature, Gen. i. 27. The soul thus constituted is possessed of powers the most *noble* and *capacious*. The human *intellect* defies the possibility of description; it comprehends ten thousand visible objects; and the present world being too contracted for its operations, it rushes into *futurity*, and *grasps* the invisible realities of the world to come, Heb. xi. 1; 2 Cor. iv. 18. The *volition* and *passions* of the soul are equally grand and wonderful, and eminently demonstrate its inestimable value.

2. *The price of its redemption.* It is bought with a price *adequate* to its worth; "For we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Behold the *dignity* of the Redeemer's *person* and *character*, Heb. i. 3; Titus ii. 13. Yet he loved us, and gave himself for us. He assumed our nature,—died for our sins,—and is now our Advocate with the Father, 2 Cor. viii. 9; Isa. liii. 5, &c. Surely "the redemption of the soul is precious."

3. *The efforts for its possession.* It is desired both by God and Satan. The Lord has devised a way for its salvation, and appointed a variety of means to promote its present and eternal happiness. This is the *ultimate design* of all his dealings with his creatures, Ezek. xviii. 32; 2 Pet. iii. 9. The god of this world also employs all his subtlety and power to destroy the souls of mankind, 1 Pet. v. 8; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. The *object* of such a contest must certainly be great and glorious.

4. *The duration of its existence.* The present is only the commencement of our being. The body is perishable in its nature, and however blooming and youthful, it must soon fade and die like the flower of the field, Isa. xl. 6—8. But the soul is *immortal*, and survives the scene of mortality, Eccles. xii. 7. When it takes its flight from earth to explore unknown regions, it will exist in *eternity*, in the participation of a *blissful immortality*, or the endurance of *eternal perdition*, Rom. ii. 6—11. Who then can calculate the value of a never-dying soul? Its salvation is more important than the *whole world*, and its destruction the most dreadful catastrophe in the universe.

II. OUR SOULS ARE IN IMMINENT DANGER OF BEING LOST.

By the *loss* of the soul, we are not to understand extinction of being; but exclusion from eternal felicity, and the punishment of endless misery, as the just demerit of sin, Rom. vi. 23; 2 Thess. i. 6—9. The danger of *thus losing* the soul, is supposed in the text, and proved by innumerable existing facts.

1. *The loss of the soul is certainly possible.* This is a plain case; “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Now “the wages of sin is death,” and therefore, except we *repent, believe*, and are *born again*, we must inevitably perish in our sins, Luke xiii. 3; John iii. 3, and 36. We are frequently warned of our perilous state, and urged to escape impending ruin, Ezck. xxxiii. 11, and xviii. 30.

2. *The loss of the soul is highly probable.* Though many do “believe to the saving of the soul,” the great majority of mankind give evident proof that they are “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” They live without God,—reject his counsels,—despise his goodness,—pursue worldly gain,—and sin against their own souls. How awful and dangerous is such a state! “The end of those things is death.” Job. xxi. 14; Prov. xxix. 1; Matt. vii. 13.

3. *The loss of the soul is truly deplorable.* It involves the most dreadful consequences. The loss of every thing temporal, and of life itself, is comparatively *nothing* to the *loss of the soul*! Luke xii. 4, 5. Who can conceive what is implied in losing all that the soul is capable of enjoying, and enduring the *wrath of God* for ever? Who can dwell with devouring fire; who can endure everlasting burning? Matt. xi, 23, 24, and xxiv. 51.

4. *The loss of the soul is utterly irreparable.* Many things may be lost in this life, without destroying our peace or endangering our final happiness. But the loss of the soul is *total* and *irrecoverable*. *Everlasting* punishment admits of no *cessation*, nor affords any *hope*. “What then shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Alas! it is all in vain; it is too late: no exchange can be made. The soul that sinneth shall surely die. “The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever;” Mark ix. 44; Rev. xiv. 11.

III. NOTHING CAN COMPENSATE FOR THE LOSS OF THE SOUL. This will appear by considering,

1. *The case supposed*; “If he gain the whole world.” This

is a mere supposition. It never existed in fact, nor is it possible. Some have gained *much* of the world, but no man ever enjoyed the *whole*. The most famed heroes of history acquired comparatively but a very small portion of it; and the worldly acquisitions of mankind in general, are *necessarily* extremely limited. The text, however, supposes an individual acquiring all the advantages the world can possibly afford; 1 John ii. 16.

2. *The inquiry instituted.* “What is a man profited?” &c. The world is evidently *defective* in its possession,—*unsatisfying* in its enjoyment,—and *transient* in its continuance; Eccles. ii. 3—11; John ii. 17. There is therefore no just comparison between *gaining* the world, and *losing* the soul. There is *no profit* either in *time* or *eternity*, in bartering the immortal soul for such an empty perishing world.

3. *The exchange proposed.* “What shall a man give?” &c. The lost sinner cannot redeem his soul. The world which he gained is *now lost* for ever. He is involved in immense debts which he can never pay. He has *nothing* to give;—he can make no offers;—he is justly punished,—and his state is unalterable. Dreadful portion!—Behold the *folly* of preferring the world to religion; and the *necessity* of seeking the salvation of the soul!

ETA.

LXXVIII. WHAT WE OUGHT TO THINK OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW xxii. 42.

“What think ye of Christ?”

1. IT is certain that the most correct views of Christ may be obtained from the Holy Scriptures, for these testify of him; John v. 39. The Old Testament testifies of Christ, in a great variety of promises, types, and prophecies; Luke xxiv. 44;

Acts x. 43. The New Testament testifies of Christ, by recording the history of his life; by inculcating his doctrines; and by exhibiting the blessings of his kingdom. Christ is therefore the sum and substance of the inspired writings.

2. The testimony thus given is most highly creditable; for it is the testimony of *infinite knowledge*, which cannot mistake, Acts xv. 18; and the testimony of *unbounded goodness*, which will not deceive; Dent. xxxii. 4. Under the guidance of these divine oracles, let us observe,

1. WHAT WE OUGHT TO THINK OF CHRIST. That we may entertain distinct ideas of this interesting subject, let us consider,

First, What we ought to think of Christ's *person*.

1. We ought to think that he is *truly man*, possessed of a human body, and a human soul, by which that body is animated. He is repeatedly *denominated* man. Thus he is called by Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 22; and by Paul in his epistles, see 1 Cor. xv. 21—47; 1 Tim. ii. 5. And he is *described* as man in his birth. "When the fulness," &c. Gal. iv. 4, 5. In his *growth*; "And Jesus increased," &c. Luke ii. 52. And in the common *infirmities*; through bodily exercise, he felt weary. That he might be prepared for renewed labours of piety and benevolence he took rest in sleep. His mind was the subject both of grief and joy; and his body of pain and death. It behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren; Heb. ii. 17.

2. We ought to think that *he is also truly God*. This appears,—From his *names*; he is called, "The mighty God," Isa. ix. 6. He is also called, "Immanuel, God with us," Isa. vii. 14; Matt. i. 23. "The Lord our righteousness," Jer. xxxiii. 6. "God," John i. 1; Acts. xx. 28. "God over all," Rom. ix. 5. "The great God and our Saviour," Titus ii. 13. "The true God, and Eternal Life," 1 John v. 20.—From his *works*; he is "the Creator of the universe," John i. 3; Col. i. 16; Heb. ii. 8—10. And the Preserver of it, in its existence, and in its order, Col. i. 17; Heb. i. 3.—From his *perfections*; he is eternal, without beginning, Micah v. 2. He is omnipresent, John iii. 13; Matt. xviii. 20; omniscient, John xxi. 17, Heb. iv. 13; omnipotent, Ps. xlv. 3; Rev. i. 8; and immutable, Heb. i. 12, and xiii. 8.—From his *pre-existent glory*, which he

enjoyed from eternity, John xvii. 5. This glory was seen by Isaiah, chap. vi. 1—3; and is ascribed to our Lord, see John xii. 41. From the *worship* paid him by God's approved servant; by Christians on earth, 1 Cor. i. 2; by angels, Heb. i. 6; and by glorified saints, Rev. vii. 9, 10.—And from the *gifts* conferred by him; as forgiveness of sins, Acts v. 31; adoption into God's family, John i. 12; the gift of the Holy Ghost, Acts ii. 33; and eternal life. This he engages to give his followers, John x. 28; Rev. ii. 10; and this they expect from him, 2 Tim. iv. 8.

3. We ought to think that *Christ is God and man united in one person*; John i. 14; 1 Tim. iii. 16. This thought of Christ renders all assertions respecting him perfectly consistent and harmonious. Thus we perceive how truly he is both the child born, and the mighty God—The Son, and the Lord of David, Matt. xxii. 45—The Root and the Offspring of David, Rev. xxii. 16. Having considered what we ought to think of his person, let us consider,

Secondly, What we ought to think of his *name*;—"Christ."

1. *This name is usually connected with that of Jesus*. Under this conjunct name of Jesus Christ, he is represented as coming into the world to save us, 1 Tim. i. 15.—Under this name he is preached to us by his servants, 2 Cor. iv. 5; 1 John i. 2.—And under this name we must, as Christians, believe on him. Acts xvi. 31.

2. We should think, *how this name, thus connected, is expressive of his great work, and the various offices by which he effects it*. The name Jesus signifies a Divine Saviour; and is expressive of *his great work*. This is to save mankind, Matt. i. 21; John iii. 17. To save them, by redeeming them from all sin, Ps. cxxx. 8. By restoring them to all the blessings forfeited by sin, 1 Pet. iii. 18. And by preserving them unto eternal life, Jude 24, 25. The name Christ signifies *anointed*, and is expressive of those *various offices* which he sustains, in effecting his work of human redemption.—Of his *prophetic* office; as anointed to teach us, Isa. lxi. 1; Acts iii. 22. Of his *kingly* office; as anointed to govern, protect, and reward us, Ps. ii. 6. Of his *priestly* office; as anointed to atone for our sins; to make intercession for us; and to bless us, Heb. iii. 1, and ix. 26, and vii. 25, 26, and ix. 28. Those who desire to

become interested in him as their Saviour, are required to receive him in all his offices, as the Lord's Anointed, John i. 11, 12.—And all who thus receive him are blessed by him. Ps. ii. 12. Hence let us consider,

Thirdly, What we ought to think of the *privileges* enjoyed by his subjects,

1. *These are various*; they include illumination, John viii. 12,—liberty, John viii. 32,—rest, Matt. xi. 28,—purity, John xiii. 8; 1 John i. 7,—protection, Isa. xl. 11; 1 Peter i. 5,—provision, Matt. vi. 33, and eternal glory, John xii. 26.

2. *They are exactly adapted to our natural state and exigencies*. We are ignorant, and want illumination; enslaved, and want liberty; burdened, and want rest; defiled, and want purity; defenceless, and want protection; needy and immortal, and want eternal enjoyments.

3. *They are amply sufficient* to fulfil our desires, Col. i. 19; Psalm cxlv. 19.

4. *And they are certain* to all who obey him, Heb. v. 9. Let us consider,

Fourthly, What we ought to think of his *demands*.

1. *These are most graciously proposed by himself*. Matt. xi. 28, 29.

2. *They are highly reasonable*. We should learn of him; for he is an infinitely wise and kind Teacher, Isa. xlvi. 17. We should obey him; for he is our rightful Sovereign, having, redeemed us by the price of his blood, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; and by the power of his grace, Psalm cxvi. 16. We should confide in him, for he is an all-sufficient and never-failing Friend. Isa. xxviii. 16, and xii. 2.

They are truly pleasant to those who are endued with his grace.—For his grace enables us to do his will, Phil. ii. 13.—And it inspires us with love, which makes our duty our pleasure, 1 John v. 3; Matt. xi. 30. Thus we ought to think of Christ. And let us now observe,

II. WHY WE SHOULD THUS THINK OF CHRIST. We should thus think of him,

1. *Because these views of Christ are true and correct*. They are the views which we know God has of him. And these views must be adopted by us, if we would choose the way of truth. Psalm cxix. 30.

2. *Because we must think aright concerning Christ, that we may act aright towards him:* for ignorance of Christ must ever prevent a due acknowledgment of him.—If we do not think aright concerning his *offices*, we shall never learn of him as our prophet; we shall never obey him as our king; nor trust in him as our high priest, John i. 10, 11. If we do not think aright concerning his *divinity*, we shall not duly honour him, John v. 23. The Samaritan woman, not knowing him, omitted prayer to him, John iv. 10. The princes of this world, not knowing him, put him to death, 1 Cor. ii. 8.

3. *Because we must act aright towards Christ or we cannot be saved by him.* Those who will not hear him, will be destroyed, Acts iii. 23; Heb. xii. 25. Those who will not obey him, must be executed as his avowed enemies, Luke xix. 27; Rom. ii. 8, 9; 2 Thess. i. 7—9. Those who do not trust in him remain under God's curse, Jer. xvii. 5. And those who deny his divinity and atonement destroy themselves, 2 Peter ii. 1. Having thus considered what we should think of Christ, and why we should thus think of him, let us,

III. APPLY THE QUESTION. "What think ye of Christ?"

1. *Do you think him an impostor*,—one who deceives the people? John vii. 12.—Then consider the *prophecies* which have been fulfilled in him, 2 Pet. i. 19.—Consider the *predictions* spoken by him, Matt. xvii. 22, 23; Luke xxi. 12, and xix. 41—44.—Consider the *miracles* wrought by him; consider and believe, John xiv. 11; 2 Chron. xx. 20.

2. *Do you think him a mere man, and not God?* If so,—Consider his names, works, attributes; his former glory, honours, and donations.—Consider these proofs of his divinity, and submit to his authority: by engaging in his service, and confiding in his mediation, Psahn ii. 12.

3. *Do you think little or nothing concerning him?* Is he not in all your thoughts? Ps. x. 4. If thus forgetful of him, Consider his gracious remembrance of you, Ps. cxxxvi. 23; Luke i. 78, 79, Ps. viii. 4.—Consider this and lament your ingratitude. Isa. liii. 4; Zech. xii. 10.

4. *Do you now think less of Christ than you formerly did?* Jer. ii. 32. If so,—consider your fall; and return to him as at first, Rev. ii. 5; Hos. xiv. 1, 2—consider his un-

wearied kindness, and hope in his mercy. 1 John ii. 1; Ps. cxxx. 7.

5. *Do you think Christ desirable*, and long to find him? Job xxiii. 2, 3. If so, then now open your hearts, to receive him, Rev. iii. 20;—and now you will find salvation ready for you. Luke xiv. 17.

6. *Do you think and find Christ an inestimable treasure?* 1 Pet. ii. 7. Then carefully abide in him, 1 John ii. 28;—steadily walk in him, Col. ii. 6;—and hope for his beatific presence. John xiv. 2, 3; 1 John iii. 2.

ALPHA.

LXXIX. EFFECTUAL PRESERVATIVES FROM SIN.

MATTHEW xxvi. 41.

“ Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.”

“ THAT ye enter not into temptation ! ” What,—is it possible for a disciple of Christ to enter into temptation,—to be influenced by temptation either to the omission of duty, or the positive violation of law? Alas! the history of the church abounds with but too many awful examples of its possibility. Many Sampsons have been shorn of their strength; many, who once flamed with the love of Christ, have degenerated into Laodicean lukewarmness; many, who once ran well, have been hindered. But though all this is possible, it is not necessary. On supposition of the *necessary* and *irresistible* influence of temptation, the most abandoned profligate would be an object of pity, but not of censure. On this supposition all the cautions against backsliding, and all the exhortations to perseverance, with which the Scriptures abound, are not only superfluous, but nugatory. The way to heaven is difficult, and surrounded with danger; but by attending to the advice contained in the text, every difficulty will be surmounted, and every temptation

effectually resisted. When these words were spoken, the circumstances of the disciples were peculiar. Already had they acknowledged Jesus to be the Christ, but their views of his character and kingdom were carnal and secular. They were soon to see him, whom they contemplated only as a conqueror, crucified and slain. To what an exercise of faith would they then be called! We are placed in circumstances more friendly to faith than the apostles. We have witnessed his exaltation as well as his humiliation. But though not exposed to *that* temptation from which they were in the greatest danger, does it follow that we are exposed to none? We are exposed to many. The advice in the text is as necessary in our case as in theirs. Let us consider,

I. THE ADVICE:—"Watch and pray." To *watch* implies continued vigilance, founded in danger. The Christian is in danger,

1. *From the world;—from its spirit.* This is opposed to God's *Spirit*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. The one leads to the world, its riches, honours, pleasures, or friendships, as to man's chief good; the other inscribes vanity on these, and points to the favour of God, Ps. iv. 6. *From its frowns.* Those who are after the flesh will persecute those that are after the spirit. Persecution has sometimes manifested itself in confiscation of goods,—imprisonment,—banishment,—death. We live in better times; but the carnal mind is still enmity against God and godliness. Hence, though persecution has ceased to be legalized, Christians are yet persecuted. As an antidote to the effects of persecution, remember that it is infinitely better to endure the displeasure of man than the frown of God, Matthew x. 28. *From its smiles.* These are more dangerous than persecution. What the Israelitish women applied to Saul and David is applicable to these, 1 Sam. xviii. 7. When the former method fails, this is adopted. Intellect, genius, talents, character, are all complimented; great professions of affection are made; and great promises are held out. As an antidote to these, remember that the friendship of this world is enmity with God, and that the rewards which he offers are infinitely superior to those which man can bestow. The Christian is in danger,

2. *From the devil.* Some deny his existence,—not because the name does not occur in Scripture, but that the Bible being a highly figurative book, it is a mere personification of something,—a personification of *disease*,—of a *public adversary of the church*, such as Nero, or of *moral evil*. Each of these is absurd. On supposition that the last were correct, then the sentence pronounced upon the serpent was a sentence pronounced upon moral evil. Read it in Genesis iii. 14. *Others admit his existence, and ascribe all the evil that exists to his RESISTLESS influence.* Let us think soberly. The Bible teaches his existence,—asserts his malignity and vigilance, 1 Pet. v. 8;—but shows us where our strength lies by which we may resist and overcome, verse 9. The Christian is in danger,

3. *From the flesh.* In greater danger from this than the former. This is an enemy in the citadel. Man is the subject of reason and passions,—in danger from both. In danger from *reason*;—*from its deification*. Some exalt it too high, and exact from it too much; they make it not only the *judge* of Divine revelation, but its *rule* and *standard*. What it cannot comprehend must be rejected. Hence the divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the atonement, and Divine influence, must be set aside. To reject any thing merely because we cannot fully comprehend it, would be to annihilate all knowledge, and introduce universal scepticism. *From its degradation.* While some exalt it too high, others sink it too low. This is done by the *Roman Catholics*, who teach that “ignorance is the mother of devotion.” This is done by *all those Protestants* who are always representing intellectual improvement as *unfriendly to personal religion*. The offices of reason in religion are two; first, to ascertain what is God’s word; and secondly, to find out its import. In danger also from *the passions*. These are constantly accessible through the medium of the senses and the memory. In greatest danger from our *constitutional sin*, Heb. xii. 1. But we must *pray* as well as *watch*, Prayer is a spiritual exercise. It is the desire of the heart, addressed to God, through Jesus Christ.

II. THE REASON UPON WHICH IT IS FOUNDED. “That ye enter not into temptation.”

1. *It is possible to be overcome by temptation.* David and Peter were thus overcome.

2. *To be overcome by temptation deprives of all spiritual enjoyment.* Some affirm the contrary. That they are wrong is evident from the experience of David and Peter, and of all who since their time have backslidden from God.

3. *To be overcome by temptation endangers the eternal interests of the soul.* Heb. x. 38.

4. *No one will be preserved from temptation by watching only.* Many have resolved against sin, and have watched against occasions to it, yet have been overcome; like Peter, they relied on their own strength.

5. *Neither will any be preserved by prayer alone.* Many who have said, "Lead us not into temptation," have afterwards entered into the very heart of it. Do you affect to wonder that they fell? Prov. vi. 27.

6. But though *separately* they are *ineffectual*, *conjointly* they render the Christian *invulnerable*.

CONCLUSION.

1. Address those who have already entered into temptation.
2. Congratulate those who have been preserved.
3. Exhort to perseverance.

OMEGA.

LXXX. REPENTANCE.

MARK VI. 12.

"And they went out and preached that men should repent."

THE preachers here mentioned were our Saviour's disciples; the time referred to, was that period of Christ's ministry, when

he called unto him the twelve, and sent them forth by two and two. But it is the *subject* of their preaching which principally arrests our attention; they preached "that men should *repent*." This was exactly the manner in which the Lord Jesus, as a public teacher, began his work, verse 14, 15, and Matt. iv. 17;—the way in which John the Baptist had commenced his, Matt. iii. 2; Mark i. 4; Luke iii. 3;—and the apostles, on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards, proceeded in the very same manner, Acts ii. 38, and iii. 19; and xxvi. 20. We infer, that the doctrine of repentance is of primary importance; and that we should frequently make it the subject of our ministry. Allow me to occupy the present time in describing its *nature*, and enforcing its *necessity*.

I. THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE. The term repentance, when religiously applied, signifies a change in the disposition of the mind from what is bad, towards that which is good, Ezek. xviii. 30; Jer. xxv. 5. It must, indeed, be allowed that the word has a somewhat different meaning in certain passages of the Holy Scriptures; as when God is said to repent, &c. but the former is its usual, plain, and obvious meaning; and that which I would endeavour to develope and illustrate by the following observations.

1. *Repentance begins* with a consciousness of the depravity, the guilt, and danger connected with our fallen and unrenewed state, associated with a serious concern about the consequence. Ezek. xx. 43, and xxxvi. 31; Acts ii. 37, and xvi. 30.

2. *This view of ourselves*, if repentance be genuine, is attended by considerable uneasiness and pain of mind, mixed with a godly sorrow on account of our crimes and our danger; sorrow, arising as much from regret that we have offended the greatest and best of beings, as from the dread of that punishment which our sins deserve; 2 Cor. vii. 9, 10; Luke xviii. 13, 14, and xxii. 62.

3. *Another quality of true repentance is a hatred to sin*, shown to be real by fruits meet for repentance; such as aversion at the sight of wickedness,—a constant endeavour to avoid all evil,—and a sincere desire to do the will of God; Isa. lv. 7; Ezek. xviii. 21; Psal. li. 13; Acts ix. 6. This hatred to sin is uniformly accompanied by,

4. *A desire to be delivered from sin*; from its guilt,—its

power,—its pollution,—and its consequences. And this desire leads to a diligent and an earnest use of all the means calculated to secure such deliverance ; Psa. li. *et passim*.

5. *Repentance is the gift of God*, Zech. xii. 10 ; Acts v. 31 ; and though, in all its distinct operations, it may, in various individuals, differ in degree, yet its nature is always the same ; combining the above qualities, and constituting the only way to Christ, who casts out none that *thus* come to him for salvation. Let us now consider,

II. THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE. This may be understood from the following particulars.

1. *God commands and requires it*, Acts xvii. 30. The doctrine was delivered by the Saviour, and by the Baptist, in the form of a command : *Repent ye*, was their mode of address.

2. *All need repentance*, because all have sinned : those who have lived lives as regular as St. Paul lived previous to his conversion, as well as those whose lives have been irregular and immoral, must repent. If there be any difference, it is this, that we are not required to repent of such sins as we have not committed.

3. *There can be no pardon, no salvation, without repentance*. So the word of God teaches, Luke xiii. 3 ;—so we infer from the very nature of things. Is it rational to ask for pardon, unless there be a consciousness of guilt ? Would not the circumstance of offering pardon or salvation to one who felt no need of such a favour be absurd ? Would any one prize such an inestimable blessing, unless he had previously felt guilt and sorrow, and had feared the awful consequences of dying without the forgiveness of sin, and the favour of God ?

From the whole of the subject,

1. *Let the mere moralist know*, that repentance is as necessary for him, as it was for the Pharisees, in the days when Christ addressed them, as in the following passages :—Matt. iii. 7, 8, and xxiii. 27, 33 ; Luke xviii. 9—14.

2. *Let the antinomian know*, that he must personally repent or perish ; Psa. xxxiv. 18, and cxlvii. 3 ; and Isa. lxvi. 2.

3. *Let every fallen professor beware*, that he can never be restored without repentance ; Rev. ii. 5.

4. *And let every sinner under heaven be assured*, that

Christ is able to save to the uttermost those that *thus* repent, and believe in the gospel.

GAMMA.

LXXXI. THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.

LUKE ix. 28—35.

“And it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered,” &c.

1. It appears from gospel history, that our Lord’s disciples, in consequence of certain early *prejudices*, remained long under the influence of some very serious *mistakes*. They thought, for instance,

— *That the Messiah’s kingdom would be an earthly one*; and, of course, that the rewards of his servants would be the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world. Hence their minds became fired with worldly ambition; and we find them often contending which should be the greatest. They also thought,—*That the Messiah would never die, but abide for ever*, John xii. 34. Hence all intimations of their Master’s sufferings greatly offended them.

2. This event, therefore, of our Lord’s transfiguration was most probably designed by him to effect two highly benevolent purposes.

First, *To improve his disciples in knowledge and grace*;—by showing them that his kingdom was not of this world;—that he must needs suffer and die according to the intimations of the law and the prophets;—that glory would certainly succeed his sufferings;—and that his servants should be glorified with him.

Secondly, *To instruct his church in all future ages*. This

is done, by what the disciples saw, and heard, and experienced on this occasion.

I. BY WHAT THEY SAW, WHEN WITH JESUS ON THE MOUNT.

1. *They saw the glorious majesty of our Lord.* "The fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening." "His face did shine as the sun; and his raiment was white as the light," Matt. xvii. 2. "His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them," Mark ix. 3. The glory in which he thus appeared, beamed in his face, pierced through his raiment, and surrounded his whole person with the most dazzling splendour. This was an *earnest* of that glory which it was predicted should succeed and reward our Lord's sufferings: compare Isa. liii. 10—12, with 1 Peter i. 11, and Phil. ii. 9—11. And this was also a *specimen* of that glory, with which he has engaged to adorn his faithful followers; John xii. 26; Matt. xiii. 43.

2. *They saw Moses and Elijah in glory.* "Two men, who appeared in glory." They saw "Moses," who died, and whose spirit must consequently have remained in a separate state, included among the spirits of just men made perfect. His appearance and conversation assure us, that departed saints are not in a state of insensible slumber, but in a state of conscious felicity; Luke xvi. 22.; Phil. i. 23.—They saw "Elijah," who was taken both body and soul to heaven; 2 Kings ii. 11. His appearance assures us of a glorious resurrection; for gospel salvation is common to all who are sanctified and preserved in Christ Jesus, Jude i. 3; and the redemption of our bodies is included in the salvation of the gospel; Hos. xiii. 14; John v. 28, 29; Phil. iii. 21.

3. *They saw a cloud of glory.* "A bright cloud overshadowed them," Mat. xvii. 5. What is here called a bright cloud, and which is thus said to overshadow or overspread them, is called by St. Peter, "The excellent glory," 2 Pet. i. 17. This was undoubtedly the Shekinah, or symbol of God's presence. It intimated,—*That God is present with his people, both in their militant, and in their triumphant state*; for here was an assemblage of saints belonging both to the church on earth, and to the church in heaven. God is present with his people in their militant state; to *save* them, Isa. xliii. 1—3. And he is present with his people in their triumphant state, to

reward them, Rev. xxi. 3, 4.—This excellent glory might also intimate,—*That communion with Christ in the mount on earth, or a saving interest in him in this world, is necessary to prepare us for heaven*, Acts xxvi. 18; Rev. vii. 14.—And this bright cloud did also most certainly intimate,—*That the mission of Christ was truly divine*; “for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, “This is,” &c., 2 Pet. i. 17. Thus were the disciples improved, and thus is the church instructed by what they saw; and also,

II. BY WHAT THEY HEARD, when thus on the mount. They heard,

1. *A voice from the excellent glory*;—“This is my beloved Son,” &c., Matt. xvii. 5. This was *an attesting voice*; testifying, that our Lord was the true Messiah, whom God had promised by the prophets, under the character of his Son, Ps. ii. 6—12. “This is my beloved Son;”—Christ is God’s Son by *miraculous conception*; on which account the angel assured the blessed virgin, that the child should be called the Son of God, Luke i. 35.; —by *a glorious resurrection*; when he was born anew from the tomb, Acts xiii. 32, 33;—by *heirship*; being possessed of all God’s treasures, Heb. i. 2—5; John iii. 35; Eph. i. 22;—by *office*; being the executor of all God’s benevolent purposes, both in saving us, John iii. 16, 17; and in glorifying us, Matt. xxv. 34; John xvii. 2. This honour he therefore claims on account of his mission, John x. 35, 36. This voice was also *an approving voice*; expressing God’s complacency in Christ; “In whom I am well pleased.” This further proves, that our Lord Jesus is the true Messiah; by showing, that what God predicted of the Messiah is fulfilled in him, Isa. xlii. 1—3. God is well pleased in him,—as our *Sovereign*, Luke i. 32, 33; as such, submit to his authority, Matt. xi. 29.—As our *Mediator*, 1 Tim. ii. 5; as such, trust in him for salvation, John xiv. 6; Ps. ii. 12.—As our *Benefactor*, Acts v. 31; as such, come to him by prayer, Acts xxii. 16.—As our *Teacher*, Acts iii. 22; as such, follow him, John viii. 12, and x. 27, 28. To this we are also urged by the voice in our text; “Hear ye him.” Hence, this was *an instructive voice*; showing us our duty as heirs of salvation.—Hear ye him; as he speaks by his *word*: take this for your rule, Ps.

exix. 30.—Hear ye him; as he speaks by his *example*: take this for your pattern, Phil. ii. 5; Heb. xii. 1—3.—Hear ye him *alone*; reject all teaching contrary to his, Mark iv. 24; 1 Thess. v. 21; 2 John 10, 11.—Hear ye him; *in all things*, relative to faith and practice, Ps. cxix. 128.—Hear ye him, *at all times*; even to the end of life, Ps. xlviii. 14, and lxxiii. 24; Heb. xii. 25. This is no less our wisdom than our duty; for while on earth our knowledge is imperfect, and we are exposed to wily enemies.

2. *They also heard a conversation on the subject of Christ's decease.* They “spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem,” verse 31. By the decease of Christ his death is undoubtedly meant. This teaches us,

—*The importance of Christ's death.* For what engaged the conversation of glorified saints must be highly important. Christ's death is important, as it became God to appoint it for our salvation, Heb. ii. 10.—It is important, on account of the benefits resulting from it, Isa. liii. 5, 6; 1 Pet. iii. 18.—It is important, as it inspires us with hope, Rom. viii. 32.—This conversation teaches us *the claims which Christ's death has on us*; on our serious *attention*, John i. 29;—on our frequent *meditation*, Psalm xlviii. 9;—and on our social *communications*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. This conversation also shews us *the interest which the glorified saints feel in the concerns of Christ's church on earth.* They undoubtedly rejoice with the angels at our conversion, Luke xv. 10. And as they have waited on our heavenly Master, so it is most probable that they may occasionally act as ministering spirits to his servants, Luke xxiv. 4, 5, 6; Rev. xxii. 8, 9. But as we have been instructed by what the disciples thus saw and heard, so we are further instructed,

III. BY WHAT THEY EXPERIENCED ON THIS OCCASION.

1. *They derived profit and pleasure from what they witnessed.* They derived *profit* from those various proofs of their Master's authority and majesty. Hereby their faith was confirmed, 2 Pet. i. 16. They derived *pleasure* from the glory with which they saw Moses and Elijah adorned. This inspired them with hope, Col. iii. 4. Being thus profited and pleased, we find Peter saying, “It is good to be here.”—*It is good to hear Moses and the prophets bear witness to Christ.* This

they do in their writings, Acts x. 43. And we should hear them, by searching the Scriptures, John v. 39.—*It is good to hear God the Father glorify his Son.* This he does by promises, predictions, and miracles, Heb. ii. 3, 4. To these attestations we should seriously attend, 1 Peter i. 19; John v. 36.—*It is good to be with Christ in the mount of prayer.* Continue herein; and thus maintain communion with him. Psalm lxii. 8, and lxxiii. 28.

2. *They felt fear at the presence of this glory;*—they were afraid, Matt. xvii. 6. This shows us God's goodness in teaching us by our fellow mortals; for we cannot bear immediate converse with God nor angels, Exod. xx. 19; Dan. viii. 17.—And teaches us to be satisfied with what God has revealed, Deut. xxix. 29. Apparitions might terrify us, but they cannot convert us. Luke xvi. 31.

3. *They obtained support and relief from our Lord,* Matt. xvii. 7. This intimates,—that Christ is ever ready to help us in our exigencies, Psalm xli. 1; Heb. iv. 15, 16.—And that his grace is sufficient for us in all our trials. 2 Cor. xii. 9; 1 Cor. x. 13.

From this narrative we may justly infer,

1. *That as the disciples knew Moses and Elijah in the mount, so the saints will certainly know each other in heaven.* This must be the case, from their public rewards, Matt. vi. 4;—their grateful acknowledgments;—their mutual communication; and the perfection of knowledge in that state, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

2. *If it was so good to be with Christ in the mount, it must still be better to be with him in heaven;* for there we shall immediately associate with all that glorious family, to which we now belong, Heb. xii. 22, 23;—we shall see Jesus as he is, 1 John iii. 2; and the vision will be eternal; Ps. xvi. 11.

ALPHA.

LXXXII. THE CHARACTER AND END OF A SENSUALIST.

LUKE xii. 20, 21.

“ But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee ; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ? so is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

How must these words have struck the ears, and have sunk into the soul of the person to whom they were addressed ! Fancy to yourselves a man wholly engaged by the affairs of this life ;—quite unconcerned about his situation as a dying mortal, and as a creature accountable to God ; his salvation,—his immortal concerns,—entirely neglected ;—at night, and alone, ruminating and contriving thus,—“ What shall I do ?” &c., (verse 17, 19,) when,—suddenly and unexpectedly,—he hears that voice, from whose sentence there is no appeal, saying, “ Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee !” &c. But why did I say, *fancy* all this ? when all that was worldly and thoughtless in this man, is probably realized in the disposition and conduct of many present, who differ from him, not in character, but in situation : against him the sentence of death had just been pronounced ; against you it is not yet uttered. Thanks be to God that it is not ! You are still in a land of hope. O suffer me to expose the impropriety and danger of your conduct, by describing,—*The folly of this person ; and the manner in which God treated him.*

I. THE FOLLY OF THE PERSON MENTIONED IN THE TEXT. The meaning of the word “ fool,” as it is here applied, may be discovered by consulting the following passages, Deut. xxxii. 6 ; Psalm xciv. 8 ; Prov. xiv. 9 ; Rom. i. 21—25 ; Titus iii. 3 ; Jer. xvii. 11. Thus understood, *folly* is wickedness ; and the folly of this man consisted in,

1. *His making the things of this life his chief good.* That he did this is manifest from the whole of what is said respecting him. The world was his god ;—it had his heart ;—all his wishes centred in it ;—his thoughts were absorbed by its con-

cerns;—he appears to have known no higher gratification than that which arose from eating, drinking, and making merry. How wicked was all this! It implies a total want of regard for God, Ps. lii. 7. If he were not a covetous man,—one who is never satisfied,—he was evidently a sensualist, who lived only for himself: see Rom. viii, 6, 13, and xiii. 14; Gal. vi. 7, 8. Besides, how foolish to depend on uncertain riches. Prov. xxiii. 5, and xi. 28; Jer. ix. 23. Can any measure of them keep off sickness, infirmities, or the “thousand other ills that flesh is heir to?” Can they prolong life, or set death at defiance? Job xxxvi. 18, 19. Such conduct tends to sensualize the very spirit. Hence, another proof of this man’s folly is manifest in,

2. *His supposing that worldly goods could satisfy his soul.* Though he appears to have believed that he had a soul, his ideas of its nature must have been very gross; or could he have said, “*soul*, thou hast much goods; eat, drink, be merry?” The folly of such conduct will appear, if we consider,—*The nature of the soul.* It is a spiritual and a rational principle, Gen i. 27, and ii. 7; Job xxxii. 8. Can the gross materials that feed the body satisfy the soul?—*The capacities of soul.* They, on account of its very nature, are so vast, that no measure of created good can possibly satisfy them. *The duration of the soul.*—It is immortal, everlasting, Eccl. xii. 7; Matt. x. 28. Can perishable things,—such as earth affords—earth that will itself be destroyed, satisfy the immortal soul of man? Such foolish conduct as that already described, naturally leads to another species of folly, that of,

3. *Presuming on continued or long life.* He said, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up *for many years*.” How infatuated must that man have been, who could thus calculate! see Psalm xlix. 11—13. Do we not *see* mortals arrested, and borne to the grave, at every stage of life? How frequently do we *hear* the sighs and groans of the dying;—we *feel* pains, infirmities, and decays of nature, which are sure harbingers of death;—and in the death of relatives and friends, we almost *taste* the deadly draught; and yet men will, with confidence, calculate on long life.

4. *Thus one species of folly or wickedness leads to another.* Men make created things their chief good: then persuade

themselves that such things will satisfy even their souls : this is naturally followed by a wish to enjoy them for many years ; and then they persuade themselves that for many years they shall enjoy them. Persons of the above description do not always pass for wicked men, Psalm xlix. 18 ; but in the sight of God, their conduct is highly offensive, Jer. xvii. 5, as will appear from,

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH GOD TREATED THE SUBJECT OF THIS FOLLY. We have in the Bible such numerous intimations of the goodness, the mercy, and the long-suffering of God, as should correct the idea of those, who, being penitent, would despair of his mercy : and of those whose severe dispositions would lead them to describe the blessed God only as a terrible sovereign. But we have, on the other hand, such intimations of God's justice, and of the exercise of Divine displeasure towards the impenitent, as should alarm the boldest offender ; and correct the errors of those, who, by a species of humanity, would question the Divine prerogative to punish, let the guilty escape, and even annihilate hell itself. The circumstance under consideration speaks awful things.

1. *This man was called away* SUDDENLY. " God said unto him, *This night* thy soul shall be required of thee." Sudden death hath been considered an evil ; hence that petition in the liturgy, " From sudden death, good Lord deliver us." In whatever light it may be viewed, as it respects the righteous, to the wicked it must be terrible. It finds them unprepared ; it snatches them from all they love ; it hurries them in their sins before the bar of God. See Prov. xiv. 32.

2. *He was called away* UNEXPECTEDLY. He had been calculating only on life and worldly enjoyments ; on living long, and enjoying much. What a terrible and unexpected arrest ! Even a good man cannot fail to be seriously affected by such a circumstance. See 2 Kings xx. 1—8 ; Isaiah xxxviii. 9.

3. *He was called away* AMIDST A PROFUSION OF WORLDLY GOODS. " Much goods laid up," was his language. Some in a state of wretchedness, misery, and want, without calculating on future consequences, have sought, and have welcomed death, as a kind deliverer from present woe. However dreadfully mistaken, such, though unprepared, have left the world without regret. But this man loved life ; he was surrounded with all that

he desired; he had, to use a common phrase, “made his fortune,” and was going to enjoy life. Ah! in what period, and in what circumstances could death be more unwelcome? See Job xx. 22, 23; Eccles. vi. 1, 2.

4. *He was called away* BY LANGUAGE THAT STRONGLY EXPRESSED THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE. The language is truly *cutting*. *He* had said, “*Soul thou hast*,” &c. *God* said, “*Thy soul is required*.” *He* had calculated on “*many years*,” *God* said, “*This night thy soul shall be required*.” *He* had said, “*Soul, thou hast much goods*,” *God* said, “*Whose shall these things be?*” *He* had acted a part most foolish; and *God* addressed him by the cutting appellation, “*Fool!*” *He* had passed through his day of grace, *totally neglecting salvation*; and *God* summoned him away, *unrenewed and unforgiven*. What a dreadful circumstance! and yet, from the remander of our text, we are led to fear that circumstances of this kind are not uncommon; “*So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*”

The following reflections urge themselves on our attention.

1. Worldly prosperity is so far from being a proof of personal goodness, or of the Divine favour, that the subjects of it may be so wicked as to incur sudden and severe destruction. See Psalm lxxiii. 2—12, 18, 19.

2. The proper enjoyment of life does not depend on large possessions, verse 15.

3. Rich men are, on account of their riches, in peculiar danger,—of living without God,—of indulging in sensual gratifications,—of presuming on long life,—and of neglecting their souls.

4. Life is uncertain.—It is therefore our highest wisdom to be living for eternity. O that men, instead of inquiring, as they too often do, in the language of worldly concern, and of worldly anxiety, “*What shall we do?*” would thus inquire after salvation. Then would we gladly point them to Jesus the mighty Saviour, to religion the true riches, and to heaven the only sure depository, for what is truly valuable in time or in eternity.

LXXXIII. THE DYING PENITENT.

LUKE xxiii. 39-43.

“And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?” &c.

IN one of David's Psalms, we find him proposing to sing of *mercy* and *judgment*, Ps. ci. 1. In this choice of subjects he manifests genuine piety and benevolence; for by a proclamation of the mercy and judgments of God, he is known and glorified; and by a proper application of those subjects, mankind are preserved from presumption and despair, which may be justly included among the most pernicious evils.

What David thus celebrates in the songs of Zion, St. Luke exemplifies in the history now before us. Have we beheld the *smiles of mercy* blended with the *frowns of judgment*? To these subjects, therefore, so interesting in their nature, and so beneficial in their effects, let us render due attention. In so doing, we may consider this narrative as concise, and expand it by explanatory observations;—as instructive, and improve it by attentive application;—as liable to abuse, and guard it by necessary cautions.

I. THIS NARRATIVE IS CONCISE, AND SHOULD BE EXPANDED BY EXPLANATORY OBSERVATIONS. Here we may particularly observe,

1. *The crimes of those sufferers who were crucified with Christ.* St. Matthew and St. Mark called them “thieves.” “Then were there two thieves crucified with him,” Matthew xxvii. 38. “And with him they crucify two thieves,” Mark xv. 27. St. Luke here calls them “malefactors.” From these accounts it appears,—that they had been *seditionous* persons, who had broken the laws of their country, by opposing the existing government.—That they had been *unjust*, by stealing the property of others, amidst those civil commotions in which they had engaged.—That they had been *cruel*, by at least occasioning, if not immediately committing murder, in their insurrec-

tion.—And from these circumstances, it is highly probable that they were confederate with Barabbas; see verse 19. Observe,

2. *The manner of their crucifixion.* It is said they were “hanged.” Now though this may be properly said of all who are crucified, yet it seems the manner of their crucifixion was somewhat different to that of our Lord’s.—For Christ was fastened to his cross by *nails*, which pierced his hands and feet: but they were most probably bound to their crosses with cords. In this case, they endured but little pain comparatively; and must have enjoyed the perfect use of their faculties. And this supposition may account for the composure with which they spake; and for the necessity of their being despatched by the soldiers. This supposition appears probable also from their conduct. Hence observe,

3. *The reproaches they are said to cast on our Lord.* As Matthew says, they “cast the same in his teeth,” Matt. xxvii. 44. St. Mark says, “They reviled him,” Mark xv. 32. Here it should be noticed,—by whom Christ was thus reviled. It is said by the “thieves.” Hence, some conclude that both concurred in reviling him at *first*. But it is most likely that only one did so, though both are named; because to put the plural for the singular, is a rhetorical figure not unusual in the sacred writings; see John xii. 4; and Matt. xxvi. 8. And St. Luke, who is most minute in the statement, mentions only one. This reviling tended to stigmatize Christ as an impostor, or one who pretended to be the Son of God, or the true Messiah, but was not so. Observe,

4. *The conduct of the penitent criminal.* He manifested true *repentance*, by confessing his sin, and the justice of his punishment;—fervent *charity*, by endeavouring to reclaim his fellow-sufferer; and exemplary *piety*, by faithfully reproving the sin he witnessed; by candidly admitting the evidence of Christ’s divine mission; by steadfastly believing in Christ, as the King and Saviour of his people; by resolutely confessing Christ, asserting both his innocence and his dignity in the presence of a persecuting multitude; and by praying to Christ as his Saviour, his King, and his God. Observe,

5. *Our Lord’s answer.* “Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” This answer assure us,—that the prayer of faith will ever prevail with God, Mark xi.

23;—and that God's favours far exceed our petitions. This suppliant only requested to be remembered by him, but he is assured that he shall not only be remembered by Christ, but be with him—with him in paradise!—with him that very day! Eph. iii. 20. Having amplified our narrative by these observations, let us recollect,

II. IT IS INSTRUCTIVE, AND SHOULD BE IMPROVED BY AN ATTENTIVE APPLICATION.

1. *It instructs sinners.* By showing them,—the *nature* of sin. It resembles the crimes of these malefactors. It comprises rebellion against God, Dan. ix. 9, 10. Robbery of God, Job xxxiii. 27; Rom. vi. 13. And cruelty, at least towards ourselves, Prov. viii. 36.—The just *desert* of sin. This is death, Ezek. xviii. 20;—eternal death, Rom. vi. 23.—And our *obligations to God* for his sparing mercy, Lam. iii. 22; Rom. ii. 4; 2 Pet. iii. 9.

2 *It instructs penitents.* By showing them,—*What* they should seek as the necessary blessings of salvation. Seek conversion from sin, assured pardon, and certain hope of heaven.—*How* they should seek these blessings. Like this penitent; seek him by true repentance; confessing and forsaking their sins, Prov. xxviii. 13. By faith in Christ; believing unto righteousness, Rom. x. 10. That faith which actually receives Christ, John i. 12, as your King, by subjection;—your Mediator, by affiance;—and your God, by earnest prayer, Psalm cvi. 4;—and their encouragement to hope. You should hope for salvation—for a full salvation, Heb. vii. 25;—a free salvation, Rev. xxii. 17;—a present salvation, Luke xiv. 17. Hope for Jesus, an impartial Saviour, 1 Tim. i. 15, 16; Rom. x. 12. He is gone into his kingdom to save you. Acts v. 31. He kindly remembers you there, Psalm xl. 17; Heb. v. 2. And he waits to be received by you, Rev. iii. 20.

3. *It instructs all true believers in Christ.* By showing them *what Christ expects from them.* That you will perseveringly *adhere to him*, Acts xi. 23;—as your King, by devotedness to his service, Rom. xii. 1;—as your Mediator, by affiance in his merit, Jude 21; Col. ii. 6;—as your God, by unceasing prayer, Acts xxii. 16; 1 Thess. v. 17, 23. That you will charitably labour to convert others, James v. 19, 20. That you will *resolutely confess him* before his enemies, by reprov-

ing sin ; by vindicating his honour ; and by avowing your subjection to him, Matt. x. 32. Here also learn *what believers may expect from Christ* ;—you may expect *to be with him in paradise* ; in a state and place of perfect felicity—of felicity full, pure, and eternal, Psalm xvi. 11. This is promised to you, Rev. iii. 21. It is prepared and reserved for you. It is prepared by Christ as your Forerunner, John xiv. 2, 3 ; and reserved by him as your Rewarder and Judge, 1 Pet. i. 4 ; 2 Tim. iv. 8. Expect to be with Christ in paradise *immediately* on your leaving this world, Rev. xiv. 13 ; Phil. i. 23. This assures us that the soul is immaterial, and does not sleep with the body, for it enjoys conscious happiness in a separate state ; that death is gainful to all the followers of Christ, Phil. i. 21 ; it fits them for the perfect service and enjoyment of God, Luke xx. 38 ; Rev. vii. 14—17 ; and that the state of departed saints is by no means lamentable, 1 Thess. iv. 13. But while we thus improve our narrative, let us recollect,

III. IT IS LIABLE TO ABUSE, AND SHOULD BE GUARDED BY CAUTIONS.

1. *Let no one abuse it by self-deception* ; or by concluding that you may obtain heaven by one short prayer to God, Matt. vii. 21.—Your religion must be similar to *this man's*. In experience you must be converted, pardoned, and sanctified, as he was, Matt. xviii. 3. And in practice you must repent, believe in Christ, and openly confess Christ, as this man did, Acts iii. 19 ; Luke xiii. 3 ; John iii. 36 ; Mat. x. 33. To this you are expressly called by the gospel, Acts xvii. 30, and xxvi. 18.—Without the enjoyment of this religion on *earth*, you cannot be admitted into paradise at *death*, Gal. vi. 15. For without pardon, you can have no title to eternal glory, Titus iii. 7. Without holiness, you can have no fitness for heaven, Heb. xii. 14.

2. *Let no one abuse this narrative by presumption*. Do not presume, from it, on what is termed a death-bed repentance, —Not on this, *as an example* of death-bed repentance. For that this man's repentance was not deferred till the last few hours of his life is most probable. He knew both the innocence of Christ, and the doctrine of the gospel. This knowledge supposes serious inquiry after truth and salvation. To this inquiry, he might have been led by the intimations of God's word, Ps. cvii. 10—15. Thus, like Manasseh, we may con-

clude that he began in prison to humble himself and seek the God of his fathers, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13. Do not presume on the *advantages* of a death-bed repentance; for you cannot enjoy the advantages which he did when dying. Most probably, you will not enjoy such exemption from distracting pain, nor such a perfect use of your mental powers; and most certainly you will not, cannot, be favoured with the present example of an expiring Saviour. Do not presume on the *certainty* of a death-bed repentance; because God's spirit may depart from you long before death, Gen. vi. 3. And though *one* in this instance sought Christ when dying, the *other* did not; he remained a hardened blasphemer, even when favoured with the greatest excitements to piety that Heaven ever vouchsafed to human beings. Do not presume on the *success* of a death-bed repentance; for whatever mercy God may have showed to others, he may then reject you. This is *evidently possible*, from God's threatenings, Prov. i. 24—29;—and it is *probable*, from your abuse of superior advantages, Matt. xi. 23, 24. Are you delaying to seek God? Then destruction awaits you, Prov. xxix. 1; Job xxxvi. 18. “Seek the Lord” now; then your salvation is certain, Isa. lv. 6, 7; 2 Cor. vi. 2.

ALPHA.

LXXXIV. MORAL DEPRAVITY THE ORIGIN OF INFIDELITY.

JOHN iii. 19.

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

WE cannot attentively review mankind in general, without being compelled to admit one of the following things,—either that the Governor of the world is not a *holy* Being, or that it is not his will that the subjects of his moral government should resemble him;—or if it be his will that they should resemble him, he has not clearly revealed it; or if he has clearly revealed

it, that the subjects of his moral government are deeply depraved, and guilty of direct rebellion against God; for nothing can be more obvious than that the world lieth in the wicked one.

To which of these causes must we ascribe this wickedness? To the first,—*that God is not a holy Being?* Impossible! for He is “the high and lofty One,—whose name is Holy, and who dwelleth in the high and holy place,” and who is “glorious in holiness.” Shall we ascribe it to the second,—*that it is not his will that the subjects of his moral government should resemble him?* Equally impossible! This would be to suppose that *infinite wisdom* could take pleasure in *folly*;—*infinite purity*, in *pollution*;—*infinite order*, in *anarchy*;—and *infinite benevolence* in *misery*. Shall we trace to it the third,—*that he has not clearly revealed his will?* The sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament will render its ascription to this cause eternally impossible;—Moses and the Prophets, Jesus Christ and the Apostles proclaim, as with one voice, “Be ye holy, for the Lord your God is holy.” Whence originates the wickedness which is in the world? Not in God, but in man;—“*Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*”

Our text suggests a variety of observations.

I. THAT LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD.

The preceding verses determine the application of this metaphor to Christ. It is frequently applied to him both in the Old and New Testament, Isaiah xlix. 6, lx. 3; John i. 4, 5, 9. The propriety of its application is obvious from various considerations.

1. *Through Christ, the evil of sin is exhibited in its strongest light.* That *sin is an evil of great magnitude* is demonstrable from the *effects already produced*. The expulsion of our first parents from paradise, Genesis iii. 24; iii. 16—19; the pains of conception and child-birth,—the noxious productions and comparative infertility of the earth,—the convulsions of nature,—war, with all its infernal concomitants,—an innumerable train of diseases,—and death. It is also demonstrable from the punishment which awaits it hereafter. Its wages is death eternal, Rom. vi. 23. But in *neither*, nor in *all* these put together, does its turpitude appear in so strong a light as on the cross of Christ. It is an evil so great that nothing can expiate it but the death of the Son of God. It is a disease so inveterate and

maligant, that nothing can heal it but the blood of Immanuel. It is a ruin so complete, that nothing can rescue from it but an omnipotent Deliverer.

2. *Through Christ the love of God is transcendantly manifested.* God's love is manifested in creation, particularly in the creation of angels and men.—More strikingly, in the redemption of the human race. *In the medium of that redemption*; the incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ. *In the subjects of that redemption*; the subjects of creating power had never offended,—the subjects of redeeming love have, Rom. v. 8. The former never resisted the operations of their Creator, but were as clay in the hands of the potter,—the latter frequently make strong and long-continued resistance. Yet his love, in spite of unworthiness and resistance, perseveres in its operations to save.

3. *Through Christ, a flood of light is shed on the doctrine of a future state.* This doctrine not peculiar to Christianity,—vestiges of it in both ancient and modern Paganism,—believed by Jews, Matt. xxii. 32; Acts xxiii. 8, 9; but illustrated by Christ, 2 Tim, i. 10. He teaches it, Matthew xxv; exemplifies it in his own resurrection, 1 Cor, xv. 20—22; and shews the connexion between our present character and our future state. It suggests,

II. THAT MEN GENERALLY REJECT LIGHT, AND LOVE DARKNESS.

Darkness, when applied to moral subjects, denotes both ignorance and sin, Rom. xiii. 12. Our text, in each of these senses, has been, and continues to be, most awfully verified.

1. *It was verified in the conduct of the Jews in rejecting Christ.* The glory of God less eminently displayed in the law than in the Gospel.—The law gives the knowledge of sin, Rom. vii. 7. The gospel reveals salvation, Eph i. 13. The sacrifices of the law were beasts, Heb. x. 4; of the gospel, the Son of God, Heb. x. 10. The law, compared with former dispensations of mercy was full of glory,—compared with this, its glory is obscured. 2 Cor. iii. 7—11.

2. *It is verified by all rejectors of Divine revelation.* Every infidel dwells in a region of darkness and uncertainty; he abounds in speculations without truth, conjectures without certainty, and queries without solutions. With all his researches,

he cannot answer one of the following questions:—Has man an immaterial spirit? Will this survive the dissolution of the body?—If so, will its future state be like its present, or will it be a state of retribution?—And if so, “What must we do to be saved?”—The Bible answers them all, but he rejects this.

3. *It is verified by all who place religion entirely in the performance of its outward duties.* These deny the power of godliness. All pretensions to assurance of salvation, they condemn as fanaticism. But the Scriptures teach such assurance, Rom. viii. 16, 17; 1 John iii. 14, 24; iv. 6, 13; and v. 2, 19. On any other supposition than the attainableness of such assurance, many passages are not only nugatory, but absurd; 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

III. THAT THE REASON WHY MEN REJECT LIGHT AND LOVE DARKNESS IS MORAL PRAVITY.

Bad systems are the offspring of bad hearts, while on the other hand, those systems *re-act* upon those hearts, and perpetuate and increase their depravity. It is not the deficiency of evidence, but the love of sin which,

1. *Produces atheism.* Wherever there is a creature, there is demonstration of the existence of a Creator, Psalm xix. 1; Romans i. 20. The atheist knows that if there be a God, he must hate and punish sin. Being resolved to persist in sin, that he may proceed quietly, he persuades himself to reject his existence.

2. *Produces deism.* Deists in general have never read the Scriptures with attention;—instance Hume: nor studied the Christian and deistical controversy.—Their hostility arises from opposition to the holiness of its requisitions.

3. *Produces opposition to the doctrine of Divine influence.* Divine influence consistent with reason; taught by Scripture, John xvi. 8; Eph. ii. 1; Rom. viii. 16; 2 Cor. i. 4; confined not to the apostolic age, but extends to the end of time; Acts ii. 39; 2 Cor. iii. 11; Heb. xii. 28.

IV. THAT THE CONSEQUENCE OF REJECTING LIGHT AND LOVING DARKNESS IS CONDEMNATION.

Condemnation. Implying,

1. *In this life.*—Mental perturbation, Isa. lvii. 20, 21. God's curse accompanying the dispensations of his providence, Deut. xxviii. 15—20. A fearful looking for of judgment, Heb. x. 27.

2. *In the life to come.* The final sentence. The nature of future punishment. Its duration.

Conclude with three remarks.

1. No man will be finally condemned because he was once a sinner, but because he refused a Saviour.

2. No man can be saved who rejects Christ.

3. He who receives Christ shall enjoy the Divine favour here, and glory hereafter.

OMEGA.

LXXXV. THE REDEEMER'S COMPLAINT.

JOHN V. 40.

“ And ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.”

WHEN we seriously contemplate a future state of existence, we are overpowered by the magnitude and awful grandeur of the important objects it presents. When in imagination we launch forth from the shore of time, into the boundless ocean of eternity, we feel our need of some one, who shall be constantly present with us, to afford us support, and to make us happy. But to whom shall we turn? Our fellow men are as destitute and feeble as ourselves. Nor is there any being who can meet our necessities, but that God whose potent arm sustains the keys of death, and the invisible world. Against him we have sinned; and can we hope for so much favour at his hands? His word reveals him gracious and merciful. He has given his Son to be our Redeemer. Our Redeemer has procured for us all we need. He offers us what he has procured, “without money and without price;” and even complains, “Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.” This complaint suggests several important considerations. Herein,

I. WE HAVE OUR NATURAL STATE EVIDENTLY IMPLIED;—the opposite of “life;”—a state of DEATH. This representation is frequently made by the scripture writers, who uniformly speak

of the unregenerate, as being "*dead* in trespasses and sins." The representation applies,

1. To the sinner's *judicial state*. We are under the law to God, our rightful Sovereign;—have broken his law by open rebellion, as well as by omissions of duty; of course, we are subject to the penalty which the law denounces; and that penalty is *death*. "The soul that sinneth shall die." Thus a condemned criminal, who has forfeited his life to justice, and now waits the time of execution, is *dead in law*. Hence ministers are said to be "the savour of death unto death;"—and the law is denominated the "ministration of *death* and of *condemnation*," 2 Cor. ii. 16, and iii. 7—9. The term, death, applies,

2. To the sinner's *spiritual state*. Accordingly, the Apostle says, "You hath he *quickened*, who were dead," &c., Eph. ii. 1—5. Here we find several points of agreement between a state of death, and that which it is employed to represent. We select two;—death is a state of *insensibility* and *inaction*. A corpse is *insensible* to any *insult* or indignity that may be offered to it; would be insensible if in the midst of a *conflagration*, nor does it feel any honours done it, or intended to be done. So a person spiritually dead feels not the *vile insult* which Satan, the "Father of lies," and the *most deeply fallen*, offers both to his *understanding* and his heart, when he employs him in his *dirty* and *degrading* drudgery. He is insensible of his *danger* of that hell on the breaking brink of which he totters:—and of his *privileges* as a ransomed son of Adam, and the happiness and honour to which he is invited, both *here* and *hereafter*. He neither feels *shame* and *regret* for his base rebellion, nor *love* and *gratitude* for what Jesus has done and suffered on his account. A corpse is totally *inactive*;—so the dead sinner makes no effort to escape misery, or to secure eternal bliss.

3. The word "death," applies remotely to the *eternal state* of the finally impenitent;—"the second death,"—everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." Rev. xx. 6, and xxi. 8; 2 Thess. i. 7—9. But,

II. WE ARE POINTED TO THE SOURCE OF LIFE. "Ye will not come to me."

1. Jesus is the source of *legal life*;—of that pardon or justification, by which the sinner's sentence is reversed. "By him all that believe are *justified from all things*," Acts xiii. 38, 39.

“There is now *no condemnation* ;” for “he was wounded *for our transgressions* ;”—“died *for us* ;”—“suffered, the just *for the unjust* ;” therefore, “by his obedience many shall be *made righteous*.” See also Acts xxvi. 18 ; Eph. i. 7 ; Col. i. 14.

2. He is the source of *spiritual* life. “I am *the vine*, ye are *the branches*.” From him believers derive their *vitality*, their *feeling*, their *rigour*, their *fruitfulness* in good works. Hence the apostle, in one place, says, “I live : yet not I ; but *Christ liveth in me* ;” and in another, reminds the pious Christian, that when Christ, who *is our life*, shall appear, he also shall appear with him in glory. Gal. ii. 20 ; Col. iii. 3, 4. From this it follows, that,

3. He is the source of *eternal life*. “Though he were as a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered ; and being made perfect, he became the *Author of eternal salvation* unto all that obey him, Heb. v. 8, 9. He *purchased* life eternal, John iii. 14, 15 ; Romans v. 1, 2. He *teaches the way* to it, John vi. 68. He, by his Spirit, *qualifies for* it. Rom. viii. 9, John xvii. 3 ; 2 Cor. v. 17. He will *dispense* it, John x. 27, 28 ; Matt. xxv. 31—46. In our text,

III. WE ARE INSTRUCTED HOW TO OBTAIN THE LIFE WE NEED. “Ye will not *come unto me*.” The “coming,” thus recommended, implies,

1. *A change of situation*. The sinner, who was “*alienated*,” and “*far off*,” now *forsakes* his way of wickedness,—*approaches* the Saviour ; “*draws nigh*” unto God, through him ; and takes his station within the pale of the church. Prov. xv. 29 ; Col. i. 21 ; Eph. ii. 13.

2. It implies, also, *a change of object*. Formerly, he looked for *happiness*, to wealth, honour, worldly connexions, &c. ; and, for *salvation*, to a poor pharisaic righteousness of his own ; but now, for both happiness here, and salvation hereafter, he is found “looking unto Jesus,” Phil. iii. 7—9. Coming to Jesus, may, perhaps, require,

3. *A change of company*. If your companions will accompany you, well. If not, you must come out from among them, and be separate, 2 Cor. vi. 17. On the other hand, if we wanted to obtain an interview with an earthly prince, from whom we hoped for such favours as none but himself could bestow, we should most gladly avail ourselves of the company

and advice of persons who had, in *circumstances similar* to ours, *sought*, and *found admittance* to his presence, and had *presented* their *petition*, and been *graciously accepted*. Apply this thought; and avail yourselves of the *experience* and *assistance* of those who have already come to Jesus, and found him able and willing to save, and who now say, "Come thou with us; and we will do thee good," &c. This coming also supposes,

4. *Confidence* in the Redeemer's power and goodness;

5. *Earnest desire* of obtaining his salvation; and, consequently, a *readiness* to make *every sacrifice*, and to use *every necessary means* in order to obtain it. From our text,

IV. WE LEARN WHAT IS THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF MAN'S ETERNAL DESTRUCTION; — "Ye WILL not come unto me." Concerning the freedom of the human will, there have been endless disputes. This is not a time and place to enter at length into the controversy; yet we may offer a few remarks.

1. It is a settled point, that no man can come to Jesus, except the Father draw him. John vi. 44.

2. The question therefore is, not whether a person may become converted without God's grace, but whether he may not so *reject* the counsel of God against himself, Luke vii. 30, and *resist* the Holy Ghost, Acts vii. 51, as to *frustrate* the grace of God? Gal. ii. 21.

3. In answer to this, it may be said, that the language of our text is that of *reproof*. Now, reproof supposes that the reproved could have acted otherwise, and better than they have done: if they could not, then the blame rests, and the reproof should also rest, somewhere else. But,

4. This point is more fully determined, by Matt. xxiii. 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often *would* I have gathered thy children together, and *ye would not*."

5. On this principle, God "is justified in his sayings;" and exonerated from the charge and suspicion of being the author of sin; while man appears to be wholly chargeable with both that and his own perdition.

Lastly, On this principle, and, indeed, even on the opposite one, every sincerely seeking soul may derive from the text the greatest encouragement. If you *will* come, you have free liberty and pressing invitation to do so; "Ho, *every one* that *thirsteth*,

come ye to the waters," Isa. lv. 1. "The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst, come. And *whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely;" Rev. xxii, 17.

ZETA.

LXXXVI. THE WORKS OF THE DAY.

JOHN ix. 4.

"I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."

JESUS CHRIST has left us an example which we are required to imitate:—an example of obedience to his parents; he was subject unto them:—an example of meekness towards his enemies; "When he was reviled, he reviled not again:"—an example of patience under the most grievous sufferings; he was oppressed and afflicted, "but he opened not his mouth:"—an example of deadness to the world; when the Jews would have made him a king, "he departed into a mountain himself alone:"—an example of humility; he washed the feet of his disciples:—an example of resignation; when in an agony, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood, he said, "Father, not my will, but thine be done:"—an example of benevolence; he "went about doing good:" an example of diligence in serving God; "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day;" &c. We may consider this passage,

I. IN REFERENCE TO CHRIST. In accomplishing the great work of redemption, Christ had to sustain and to execute various offices: he was God's servant, and it behoved him to work the works of him by whom he was sent into the world.

1. *He was a Prophet or Teacher*, to make known the mind and will of God to the human race. This was partially done by Moses and the prophets; but the economy of salvation was never plainly unfolded,—the perfections of the Deity were never clearly exhibited,—life and immortality were never fully

brought to light, till HE who was in the bosom of the Father declared them. Jesus Christ has given us the most satisfactory information respecting the nature of God, John iv. 24;—the extent of the moral law, Matt. v. 21, 22, 27, 28;—the plan of salvation, John iii. 14, 15;—the immortality of the soul, Luke xvi. 22—26;—the resurrection of the body, John v. 28, 29;—and the future destiny of the righteous and the wicked, Matt. xxv. 46. From him we learn what duties we owe to God, Matt. xxii. 37; to our brethren, Matt. xviii. 34, 35; to our enemies, Matt. v. 44; and to all mankind, Matt. vii. 12.

2. *He was a Priest*, and had to make atonement for sin. We are rebels against God; have broken his laws, rejected his counsel,—trampled on his authority,—provoked his indignation,—incurred his displeasure,—and exposed ourselves to endless misery. Without shedding of blood is no remission,—no reconciliation; and it is utterly impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin; sin must be atoned for in the same nature in which it was committed. Hence Christ had a body prepared, became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and by shedding his precious blood he made atonement for our sins. By one oblation of himself once offered, he made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of all mankind. We are reconciled to God by the blood of his cross; we are sanctified by the offering of his body, for he gave himself for us, “that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

3. *The zeal of Christ* was in unison with his declaration in the text. *As a Prophet*, he seized every opportunity to fulfil his mission; preaching in houses, in synagogues, in the temple, in a ship, on a mountain: sometimes we hear him address a multitude, and sometimes an individual, Matt. v. 1; Mark ii. 2; John iii. 1, and iv. 10. *As a Priest*, he was anxious to enter upon his work: see Luke xii. 50. Nothing could divert his attention, or turn him aside from the path of duty; he *must* finish his work,—or mercy cannot be exercised,—man cannot be saved,—Satan’s kingdom cannot be destroyed. Neither the malice of his enemies, nor the unkindness of his friends, nor the perfidy of his betrayer, could induce him to relinquish his undertaking.

4. *The promptitude of Christ* deserves our attention. "I must work the works of him that sent me *while it is day*;" that is, during my continuance upon earth. Not many months after he uttered this declaration, he was crucified,—his eyes were closed in death. However, he did not fail to accomplish what he had voluntarily undertaken: hence he could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," John xvii. 4; and the very last words he uttered, while hanging on the cross, were, "It is finished."

We now proceed to consider the passage,

II. IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES. *We* have a great work to do, in performing of which we are not mere machines, but moral agents. The work, however, is of a very different nature from that which was committed to our blessed Lord. We have not to suffer the punishment due to sin; to sweat great drops of blood, nor to endure the agonies of the cross; that was the Redeemer's work, and has, as we have already observed, been accomplished by him. But let us not for a moment imagine, that Christ did our work as well as his own; he did the work of a Saviour, but not the work of a sinner. We have to do,

1. *The work of repentance.* Christ is exalted to give repentance; but he will not, he *cannot* repent for us: this we must do for ourselves,—it cannot be done by proxy. Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin; and where this godly sorrow is, there is a hatred to sin; and this hatred will be evinced by abstaining from all appearance of evil,—by a watchful and circumspect conduct,—by searching the Holy Scriptures,—by fervent supplications to Almighty God,—by making restitution to those whom we have injured,—and by a diligent use of all the means of grace. Do not suppose that this is an easy work; it is a very difficult and laborious task, and requires much diligence and self-denial. But this work must be done; various sacrifices must be made; the world, the flesh, and the devil must be conquered; or we must perish everlastingly. And this work must be done *immediately*,—without delay; the night cometh,—there is but a step between you and death. See Luke xiii. 23—28.

2. *The work of faith.* The Jews said to Christ, John vi. 28, 29, "What?" &c. This is a work of the understanding, of the will, of the judgment, of the affections, and of all the powers of the human mind. It is called a believing with the *heart*

unto righteousness,—a believing with *all the heart*. It is said to be a coming to Christ,—a trusting in Christ,—receiving Christ, &c. Hence you perceive that *believing* is a *work*, and a work that requires the exertion of every faculty of the soul; the understanding must contemplate his excellencies,—the judgment must approve of him,—the will must choose him,—the affections must be placed upon him,—and the whole heart must cleave unto him. Without faith we cannot please God, obtain pardon, or escape endless misery; see Hebrews xi. 6; Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 36. Let us not, however, suppose that when the penitent hath fled for refuge to the hope set before him, that his work is all done. He has only just entered into God's vineyard; he must bear the burden and heat of the day. He has only just enlisted into the army of Immanuel, he must "fight the good fight of faith." He has only just girded on his armour, he must contend with principalities and powers, Eph. vi. 12. He has only just begun the christian race; he must run until he grasps the prize.

3. *Constant works demand our attention.* *Works of piety*;—praying and praising, hearing and reading the word of God, with all other means of grace. *Works of mercy*; we are to admonish the profane, to instruct the ignorant, to visit the sick, to comfort the distressed, to relieve the necessitous; to bless them that curse us, to pray for them that despitefully use us; "to do good to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith." *Works of self-denial*;—to put off the old man, to mortify the deeds of the body, to "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," must be our daily employment.

4. *And all this must be done while it is day*, that is, before death arrives. Consider,—the *importance* of your work; with the performance of this, your happiness, in time and eternity, is inseparably connected.—The *difficulties* you will have to encounter,—from the world,—from the devil, and from the corruptions of your evil nature.—The *shortness of life*, James iv. 14.—The *consequences of neglecting* your work;—you will be miserable through life, hopeless in death, and ruined to all eternity.

We conclude by saying,

1. "Search the Scriptures," that you may know what God requires you to do.

2. Pray earnestly for grace, that you may be enabled to discharge your duty.

3. Improve your time, and employ your talents; that when you come to the close of life, you may be enabled to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," &c. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

THETA.

LXXXVII. CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

John xii. 46.

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

THERE is no subject more interesting to the Christian, than the character of Jesus Christ. He is not only infinitely glorious in his person, but exceedingly precious to his believing people. He sustains every character, and fills every office, that can possibly endear him unto them, and render him the supreme object of their attachment and delight. In him, therefore, they glory, and count all things but loss for the excellency of his knowledge. Through him they receive every blessing, and trust in his name for complete and eternal salvation. He reigns in their hearts by his grace, as their Sovereign; and is the High Priest of their profession, by whom they draw near to God, and are cleansed from all unrighteousness. He is also their *infallible* Teacher, imparting heavenly instruction to their minds, and delivering them from the fatal delusions of sin and Satan. This is the *specific character* he assumes in the text, in which he declares to the Jews, "I am come a light into the world," &c. In these words the Saviour distinctly represents,

I. THE DESIGN OF HIS MISSION. "I am come a light," &c. He is *perfect* and *essential light* in his own essence; and like the sun of nature, he sheds his enlivening beams to disperse the condensed darkness that envelopes mankind. He is the *source*

and *medium* of all Divine knowledge, and came a “light into the world” by his office,—by his gospel, and by his Spirit.

1. *By his office.* He had long been announced in the vision of prophecy, as a Divine Prophet, “the Sun of Righteousness,” and “a Light to lighten the Gentiles,” &c. And when he assumed human nature he was recognized as a “Teacher come from God;” and “never man spake like this man,” was the encomium bestowed on his teaching. He taught the most *sublime* and *important* doctrines; explained the law and the prophets; more clearly revealed the perfections and will of God, the redemption of the world, the way of salvation, the certainty of a future state, &c., John i. 18; iii. 16; Mark i. 15; Matt. vii. 13, 14; verse 28, 29. Such was the *prophetic office* and work of Christ, when he came “to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death.”

2. *By his gospel.* It is therefore emphatically called, “*the light* of the glorious gospel of Christ.” The Mosaic dispensation was *comparatively* dark and obscure: it was only the general *outline* and *shadow* of the more glorious revelation of “grace and truth by Jesus Christ.” Now, “life and immortality are” *fully* “brought to light by the *gospel*.” It clearly unfolds the *whole system* of Divine truth, in its connexion with the salvation of mankind; it discovers the nature, blessings, and privileges of the covenant of grace; and infallibly teaches the only way to happiness and heaven, 1 Cor. i. 21; Rom. i. 16. Wherever, therefore, the gospel is disseminated, either in its *written* or *ministerial revelation*, it is graciously designed to “turn men from darkness to light, and make them wise unto salvation.”

3. *By his Spirit.* A *measure* of the Holy Ghost has been given to mankind in all ages, Gen. vi. 3; Job. xxxii. 8. But the most *enlarged diffusion* of his influence, is the distinguishing glory and promise of the Christian dispensation. When Jesus therefore was “glorified,” he, according to his word, poured out of his Spirit more abundantly “on all flesh, to convince the world of sin, and guide his people into all truth, John vii. 39. As a spirit of “wisdom and understanding,” he dissipates darkness and error, and communicates all spiritual knowledge and holiness to them that believe, 1 Cor. ii. 10—15; 2 Cor. iii. 18. Thus Christ is the true light of the moral world, which, he

assures us in the text, was one important design of his manifestation in the flesh. We shall now consider,

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF SALVATION. "That whosoever believeth on me." It must be acknowledged that faith, as an *abstract principle*, is difficult to define; but when it is considered in connexion with its *objects* and *effects*, it is comparatively easy to comprehend. And hence it is thus represented throughout the Scriptures. In the passage before us,

1. *The object of faith is specified.* "Whosoever believeth on me." Christ is not the *exclusive*, but the *concentrating object* of Christian faith. We must believe in the triune God, and all revealed truth. But saving faith *principally* regards Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of the world, and the Saviour of sinners. We should believe in the divinity of his person,—the authority of his mission,—the efficacy of his sacrifice,—the dignity of his offices,—and the sufficiency of his grace, &c.

2. *The nature of faith is implied.* "Whosoever believeth," &c. The personal exercise of faith is a *complex act* of the mind, by which we *fully credit* the record which God has given of his Son,—*cordially approve* the appointed method of salvation,—and *actually embrace* Jesus Christ as our all-sufficient Saviour. The different acts and operations of faith are *metaphorically* represented by *looking* and *coming to, receiving from*, and *trusting in* Christ, for every promised blessing of the gospel, &c. Isaiah xlv. 22; Matt. xi. 28; John i. 12; Eph. i 12, 13.

3. *The necessity of faith is suggested.* It is here made the condition of participating an interest in Christ. He *only* who believes in him as the light of the world, shall be delivered from darkness. He that *believeth not* is condemned already, and abides in the gross darkness of sin and death. But living faith receives all the personal benefits of redemption, and is the *only instrument* by which we can possibly obtain salvation and eternal life, Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 36. As closely connected with this principle, we may regard,

III. THE PRIVILEGE OF BELIEVERS. "They shall not abide in darkness." The Christian's privileges are exceedingly great and glorious. That which is mentioned in the text,

is highly desirable, and is graciously promised to all the subjects of saving faith.

1. *They shall not abide in mental darkness.* They are naturally "alienated from the life of God through the *ignorance* that is in them." But by Divine grace the eyes of their understanding are enlightened, and they receive correct and comprehensive views of the whole science of godliness. Being made "light in the Lord," they have new conceptions of every subject. Their former darkness is passed away, and "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines into their hearts through Jesus Christ." Isaiah lx. 1; 1 Peter ii. 9.

2. *They shall not abide in spiritual darkness.* Sin and misery are justly represented by a state of *darkness*, Col. i. 13. But the Saviour delivers his people from guilt and condemnation, purifies their hearts, and fills them with joy and peace through believing, Eph. iv. 14.—As God is light, they receive the impress of his moral image, which is "righteousness and true holiness." The light of grace both *illuminates* the mind, and *sanctifies* the soul, Psalm xcvi. 11.

3. *They shall not abide in practical darkness.* They shall no longer wander in the forbidden paths of sin and error, under the galling yoke of the prince of darkness. Being saved from the broad road of destruction, "they walk in the light as God is in the light," and their path shineth more and more unto the perfect day of ineffable bliss, chapter viii. 12; Col. i. 12. Let us then adore the Saviour's character, believe in his holy name, and "walk as children of light."

ETA.

LXXXVIII. THE INTERESTING INQUIRY.

JOHN xiv. 22.

“Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”

THIS question originated in a mistaken apprehension of the character and kingdom of the Messiah. The apostles evidently supposed that he would speedily restore the kingdom of Israel, and reign as a temporal and victorious sovereign. Hence, when he informed them of his approaching departure, their ambitious hopes were disappointed, and their hearts filled with pungent sorrow. In order, therefore, to instruct and console their minds he assures them that he was going to prepare a place for them; and that in due time he would come again, and receive them to mansions in his father's house. He also promises in the meantime to send them another Comforter, even the spirit of Truth, through whose agency he would manifest himself unto them, and to all his faithful followers. But not fully comprehending the Saviour's meaning, Judas, or rather Jude, the brother of James, said, “Lord, how is it that thou,” &c. This interesting inquiry will direct our attention to the subject of Christ's manifestations to his people; in which exalted privilege we may observe,

I. THE CHARACTERS BY WHOM IT IS ENJOYED. The distinction made in the text is worthy of particular attention. “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto *us*, and not unto the *world*?” Here is evidently a very important difference of character. Believers are a *distinct* and *separate* people from the ungodly world. *Naturally*, they were *of the world*; but now they are *chosen out of it*, and redeemed from its pollutions. Christ regards them as his own peculiar people, of whom he says, “They are not of the world.” This separation, however, must not be considered as *total* and *absolute*, but *moral* and *religious*; and implies,

1. Believers are not actuated by a *worldly* spirit. They once

possessed a disposition perfectly *congenial* with this present evil world, which led them to seek all their happiness in its perishing enjoyments. But now they are convinced of its folly and vanity, and are "*transformed* by the renewing of their minds." Being delivered from the *spirit* of the *world*, they have received the Spirit which is of God, which uniformly actuates and governs them as the followers of Christ. Their *hearts* are detached from the world and sin, and are wholly given to God, Col. iii. 1—3 ; 1 John ii. 15.

2. Believers are not *attached to worldly associates*. Inter-course with the men of the world is certainly just and proper, in many respects. Religion does not teach us to be rude, or unsociable, nor will it dissolve the endearing ties of natural affection. Christians are lights of the world, and are called to constant activity and usefulness ; but they will never *choose* and *prefer* the ungodly as their *intimate* companions. This would be in direct opposition to piety of disposition,—the authority of Scripture,—the profession of Christianity,—the prosperity of the soul,—and the example of the saints, 1 Cor. vi. 14—18 : Eph. v. 11 ; James iv. 4 ; Psalm xxvi. 4, 5.

3. Believers are not *conformed* to worldly practises. They renounce its pomps and vanities, and follow not the multitude to do evil. Being rescued from the world that "lieth in wickedness," they no more walk according to its ungodly course ; they are not influenced by its opinions, captivated by its snares, or governed by its maxims, &c., Psalm i. 1, 2 ; Acts ii. 40. This separation from the world forms the grand distinction of character between saints and sinners ; and enables us clearly to ascertain the subjects *interested* in the privilege specified in the text, which we are now to consider in,

II. THE PROPERTIES WHEREBY IT IS DISTINGUISHED. To *manifest* is to discern, reveal, and *make known*, chap. iii. 21 ; Eph. v. 13.—Thus Christ has been manifested to his people under every dispensation of grace.—To the patriarchs and prophets by various promises, types, and visions.—And to his apostles and primitive followers in human nature, Heb. i. 1, 2 ; John i. 14.—The Saviour still manifests himself to such as come out from the world, and are devoted to his service. To comprehend how this is done, it will be necessary to notice.

1. *The object of his manifestations.* It is *himself* in every respect requisite to promote the comfort and salvation of his people; in the glories of his person,—the perfection of his work,—the sufficiency of his offices,—the plenitude of his grace,—the freeness of his blessings,—the mysteries of his gospel, and the felicities of his kingdom, &c., chapter xvii. 8, 22, 23. We thus obtain a distinct knowledge and *personal* interest in Christ, who also reveals the Father to the soul in all the perfections of his character,—the purposes of his will,—and the indwelling of his spirit, ver. 20, 21, and 23.

2. *The seasons of his manifestations.* He is certainly not limited to any specific time, or place, in the communications of his grace; he is everywhere present, and always waiting to be gracious: but in general he manifests himself in the appointed means of salvation.—When we return to him by repentance and faith,—in his public ordinances,—in our private devotions,—in the exercise of holy principles,—in the paths of faithful obedience,—in every time of need,—in “the valley and shadow of death,”—but *most gloriously* in his eternal kingdom, where we shall “be like him, and see him as he is,” Isaiah lx. 31; Col. iii. 4, &c.

3. *The means of his manifestations.* These are principally the *instrumentality* of his *word*,—and the *agency* of his *spirit*. He “opens our understandings that we may understand the Scriptures, which testify of him, and reveal the way to eternal life,” Luke xxiv. 32.—By his Spirit he discovers himself to the mind, in all his mediatorial works and saving benefits.—The Holy Ghost is the *appointed, efficient, and universal* agent of all Divine intercourse, and spiritual enjoyments, &c., chapter xiv. 13—15; 1 Cor. vi. 11.—We must now consider this privilege, as it respects,

III. THE EFFECTS WITH WHICH IT IS ACCOMPANIED. These are various, and infallibly distinguish between *real communion* with Christ, and mere *presumptive delusion*. If we enjoy the privilege of the Divine manifestation,

1, *It will promote humility of mind.* The inestimable blessings of grace communicated to believers deeply humble their souls before God. Discovering by the light of truth the ineffable glory and goodness of God, and their own utter sinfulness and unworthiness, they sink into unfeigned *self-abhorrence*, and

prostrate *adoration*. These are the genuine and invariable effects of gracious visits from the Lord, Job xlii. 5, 6; Isa. vi. 5—7.

2. *It will produce conformity to Christ*. The intercourse of friendship is naturally productive of *resemblance*.—And when the Sun of Righteousness arises on his people, they receive the impress of his *moral image*. By his manifestations they are graciously *transformed*, and *progressively* sanctified. They imbibe his Spirit, live under his influence, and imitate his example, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

3. *It will inspire felicity in the Lord*. The pleasures of religion are “unspeakable and full of glory.” When Christ manifests himself to the soul, he banishes every sorrow, and imparts a *fulness* of joy and peace to the believing mind. His service becomes *delightful*, and his presence makes our paradise. Let us seek such enjoyments, and pray for uninterrupted “fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and communion with the Holy Ghost.”

ETA.

LXXXIX. THE POURING-OUT OF GOD'S SPIRIT.

ACTS ii. 17.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.”

IN this highly interesting chapter, we find an account,

1. Of the Divine *testimony* borne to the truth of the gospel, by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. Here it appears, that by inspiration, the apostles were enabled at once to speak various languages which they never before understood;—that what they were thus inspired to declare, were the wonderful works of God; or the operations of his mercy, power, and wisdom, displayed in our redemption by Christ;—and that all who were then at Jerusalem heard these wonderful works of God declared in their own respective languages.—This

intimated that the gospel was designed for the benefit of all the human race. In the succeeding verses we have an account,

2. Of the different *effects* which this event produced on the different characters who witnessed it.—In the devout, it excited amazement, which led them to make serious inquiry respecting what was occurring, verse 5—12—In the careless, it excited contempt; which led them to oppose the gracious designs of God, and to treat the work of God with derision and blasphemy, verse 13. But the wrath of man in this, as in former cases, turned to the praise of God; for in the sequel we find an account,

3. Of Peter's *discourse* in reply to those aspersions, thus cast on the works of god by his wicked opposers. In this discourse Peter repels the senseless charge of drunkenness, verse 14, 15;—and shews that this remarkable occurrence is in fact the fulfilment of prophecy, verse 16, 17. “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass, in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.” In improving these words, it may be proper to make some observations on them, and some application of them. Let us make,

I. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THEM. Here we may notice,

1. *The blessings promised; God's Spirit.* “I will pour out of my Spirit, saith God.” By the Spirit here promised is certainly meant both his miraculous and saving influence. *His miraculous influence.*—This was imparted to confirm the truth of the gospel, and to promote the spread of it in the world, Heb. ii, 3, 4; 1 Cor. xiv. 22. By means of this influence, the apostles, and many primitive Christians, were endued with various gifts; as the gifts of wisdom, or knowledge, or faith, or healing, or miracles, or prophecy, or discerning of spirits, or divers kinds of tongues, or the interpretation of tongues: see 1 Cor. xii. 6—11. By the Spirit here promised is also meant,—*his saving influence*; this is enjoyed by all believers in Christ, John vii. 37, 39. The effects of this influence are intimated by the testimony of John the Baptist, Matt. iii. 11. These effects are farther intimated by the fiery appearance which the Holy Ghost was pleased to assume on his descent, verse 3. For as fire enlightens, purifies, and warms; so believing souls are enlightened with knowledge, purified from sin, and invigorated with power, by the influences of God's Holy Spirit. 2 Tim. i. 7. Let us notice,

2. *The manner of its dispensation*; it will be poured out. This indicates, *the prerogative* of God; that the influences of his Spirit are at his disposal. He withholds those influences, or dispenses them, or withdraws them as he pleases, Matt. xx. 15; Eph. i. 11; Phil. ii. 12, 13. The pouring out of God's spirit also indicates,—the special properties of the blessing promised. For instance, that it will be *gratuitous*; or given freely, like water from a fountain, John iv. 10; Rev. xxii. 17. That it will be *abundant*; given bountifully, without restraint, Eph. v. 18; Psalm lxxxi. 10. And that it will be *perpetual*; given in unfailing succession. Titus iii. 5, 6. Let us notice,

3. *The extent of its influence*,—upon all flesh. By all flesh, is meant the whole human race, however distinguished, by descent, by circumstances, or by sex. However distinguished by *descent*; whether of Jewish or Gentile extraction. This appears from the gift of Christ, Isa. xlix. 6; Luke ii. 30—32; and from the gospel ministry, Luke xxiv. 47.—However distinguished by *circumstances*, whether bond or free. Both may obtain it and both need it. The slave with this, enjoys liberty, 2 Cor. iii. 17. The master, without this, is a slave, 2 Tim ii. 26; Col. iii. 11.—Or however distinguished by *sex*; whether male or female. For however the Female sex may be enslaved by savages, oppressed by the heathens, or degraded by Mahommedans, yet Christianity regards both sexes with equal favour. See Gal. iii. 26—29. This promise farther intimates, that the blessing, thus free for the whole human race, shall become generally enjoyed by them. Psalm lxxii. 6, 8. Hence let us notice,

4. *The season of its communication*,—the last days. By the last days are certainly meant the days in which we now live.—These are called the last days, because they are the days of the gospel dispensation; which is the last dispensation of grace that God will ever establish with mankind, Heb. xii. 27, 28.—And during these days this general out-pouring of God's Spirit may be expected from scripture prophecy. See Psalm ii. 8; Isa. ii. 1—10; Dan. ii. 44. As these prophecies suppose the pouring out of God's Spirit, let us notice,

5. *The certainty of its effusion*. “It shall come to pass, saith God, in the last days, I will pour out of my Spirit.” This event is certain,—for it is *predicted*, and it will be fulfilled. The word of prophecy is sure, 2 Peter i. 19. It is *promised* and

will be performed. The word of promise is faithful. Psalm lxxxix. 33, 34.—It is predicted and promised by *God*; whose power enables him, whose truth engages him, and whose honour binds him to accomplish his word. Numb. xxiii. 19; Psalm cxvii. 2.

Having made some observations on these words, let us now make,

II. SOME APPLICATION OF THEM. In doing this, consider,

1. *The strong claims which this subject has on our attention.*

It claims attention *by the importance of the blessing which it exhibits*. The importance of this blessing appears from the *effects* ascribed to it. It is by God's Spirit that we are quickened when dead in sin, Ezek. xxxvii. 14. By this Spirit we understand our duty, as prescribed by God's word, Prov. i. 23. By this Spirit we are strengthened for all pious exercises, Eph. iii. 16. By this Spirit we are delivered from the oppression of sin, Romans viii. 2. By this Spirit we are restored to the whole image of God, 2 Cor. iii. 18. By this Spirit we are comforted, with love, hope, and joy, Romans v. 5, and xv. 13, and xiv. 17. By this Spirit our pious exertions are rendered successful, Ezek. xxxvii. 7—10; 1 Cor. iii. 6. Thus the influence of God's Spirit is highly important, as it is necessary to our salvation; for without it we cannot enjoy life, nor wisdom, nor liberty, nor strength, nor holiness. It is of importance, as it is necessary to our comfort; for, without it we must be destitute of love, and hope, and joy. It is of importance, as it is necessary to our usefulness; for without it we must labour in vain, Ps. cxxvii. 1. This subject claims attention, *by our interests in the season of its communication*. We live in the last days, when God's Spirit is expressly promised; when it may be confidently expected; and when it should be earnestly sought in the use of all proper means. This leads us to consider,

2. *The duties to which this subject urges us.* It particularly urges us, to *apply* for the saving influences of God's Spirit, as he requires us in his word. By repentance, Acts ii. 38, 39; by faith in Christ, John vii. 39; Gal. iii. 14; and by earnest importunate prayer, Luke xi. 13. It urges us, to employ all those *means* which the Spirit of God is known to bless, that we may be instrumental in saving those around us; as good conversation, good books, and a faithful gospel ministry, Eccles.

xi. 6. To implore the general effusion of God's Spirit for the conversion of the whole human race. This should be done by us individually, in our secret retirements; like David, Ps. li. 18, and lxxii. 18, 19, and Isa. lxii. 1. And it should be done by us collectively; in social worship, Ps. xc. 16, 17; Luke xi. 2. To cultivate deep humility of spirit; by self-diffidence in all our pious engagements, Jer. x. 23; Zech. iv. 6; and self-abasement, in our devout and grateful acknowledgments to God, 1 Cor. xv. 10, and iii. 7; Ps. cxv. 1. Let us consider,

3. *The hopes with which this subject inspires us.* On engaging in the duties to which our text urges us, it encourages us to hope,—*for the saving influence of God's Spirit in our own souls*; from the equity of God as our judge, Luke xviii. 7; from the kindness of God as our friend, Luke xi. 9, 10; and from the love of God as our Father, Luke xi. 11—13. Our text encourage us to hope also,—*for the general effusion of God's Spirit on the human race.* This is certain, for God here promises it; “I will pour out of my Spirit,” &c. And this should be *expected now*; for it will be done in God's time, Isa. lx. 19. And God's time is these last days, Psalm cii. 13; Isa. xxxii. 1, 2, 15—17.

ALPHA.

XC. A KNOWLEDGE OF TIME; A SKETCH FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY.

ROMANS xiii. 11.

“Knowing the time.”

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver; a word spoken in season, how good is it!” Such were the observations of Solomon; and who can question their truth! Instruction, to be effectual, must always be seasonable; and words should be fitly spoken, in order that they may subserve the purposes for which they are delivered. Our Divine Master, who

was no less a pattern for ministers than people, most admirably illustrated the truth of these remarks. How seasonable was his advice! How fitly spoken were his words! Peculiar seasons demand appropriate sentiments, and suggest suitable subjects for discussion; and it should be the business of Christian ministers to seize opportunities, and make passing events contribute to the instruction of their hearers.—When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, men should be taught to learn righteousness; to rend their hearts, and not their garments, &c.—When the Lord sends us fruitful seasons, how suitable is that instruction, which leads to gratitude and excites to adoration!—When death tears from our embraces a dear relative, or an affectionate friend, how proper to be reminded of our latter end!—And when we meet, as on the present occasion, to mark our revolving moments, and greet the entrance of another year, what subject can be more suitable for our meditations, than the one suggested by the text?—“Knowing the time.” Two things we will notice;

I. WHAT IS THAT KNOWLEDGE OF TIME WHICH WE SHOULD BE SOLICITOUS TO SECURE?

II. WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS WHICH THIS KNOWLEDGE IS CALCULATED TO PROMOTE?

1. *We should know time in its nature.* Various definitions have been given of it; by one, it has been termed “a fragment of eternity broken off at both ends.” By another, “finite and successive duration, distinguished by past, present, and future; and measured by the revolutions of the heavenly bodies, which God has appointed for this end.” The description of another is,

“From old eternity’s mysterious orb
Was time cut off, and cast beneath the skies,” &c.

See YOUNG.

Time in its nature is *fleeting*, ever on the wing,—*uncertain*, “we know not what a day may bring forth,”—*important*, “pregnant with all eternity can give.”

2. *We should know time in its use.* God never bestows any blessing upon man without a design; time is given for a most important purpose; but, alas! the right use of time is but little known! Multitudes squander it away with the most perfect unconcern, as if it were entirely their own, wholly at their disposal,

and never to be accounted for.—The right use of time must be determined by the sacrifices which we have to make,—the duties we have to perform,—and the blessings we have to secure,

3. *We should know time in its value.* But here, alas! we enter on a difficult task, and attempt an arduous calculation. Who can estimate the full value of time? There are various ways in which men calculate the value of worldly goods; sometimes by their scarcity, gems, pearls, diamonds, and precious stones, are valuable only as they are rare; and even the articles of life become increasingly valuable in proportion as they are scarce: even in this sense how incalculably valuable is time! There is but one single moment of it in the world at once, and another is not given till that is taken away; the clock that strikes informs us not that we have so much time in possession, but that so much is irrecoverably gone; and for this reason the poet calls it the “knell of a departed hour,” which rings but for the death of another portion of our time. The blessings of Providence are often lavished upon us in rich abundance, so that we can hoard them up; but, “time is dealt out by particles,” or, like some precious invaluable cordial, in single drops, that not one of them may be wasted. Sometimes we judge of the value of a thing by the advantages which may accrue to us through the possession of it; on this account we deem gold and silver valuable, as these are the mediums of commerce, and by them we secure houses, lands, or merchandise. Estimate the value of time by this rule. Oh what may you not gain by the improvement and proper disposal of your time!

“The man who consecrates his hours,
By vigorous effort, and an honest aim,
At once he draws the sting of life and death;
He walks with nature, and her paths are peace.”

At other times we value a thing by the shortness of the period we shall have it in possession, and the impossibility of recovering it when lost. In this way estimate the value of time. To thousands of human beings time is but a mere point, a hand-breadth, or a span; to us it has been more extended; but Oh, our time will soon end; it is like a shadow that declineth, a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and swifter than a weaver's shuttle; and when once gone, it will return no more. Where is yesterday; It is with the years beyond the flood, and you

may as well attempt to call back one of them, as recall the last moment.

4. *We should know time in its management.* This is a most important point; the management of time is awfully neglected. "There is a time for every purpose under the heaven." God never gives you work without giving you time to do it: but he gives you no spare time, no extra, unnecessary time. Does time hang heavy on your hands? Then you may conclude there is some duty neglected which should have occupied that time. Have you no time for the performance of that work which God and your own conscience say ought to be done? Then you may rest assured there is some mismanagement of your time. Know your time, and know the duties you have to perform, and let every hour have its work. O what incalculable disorders are introduced in society by the mismanagement of time! Business is often neglected, duties are left undone, confusion induced, and souls irrecoverably lost, for want of "knowing the time."

5. *We should know time in its termination.* Time will end at the final consummation of all things. The day of judgment will be the *last* day, and the most eventful, since days began to be numbered; "but of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man." But your individual time will end long before, and though the period, the place, and the circumstances are concealed from you, yet the moral feelings which will accompany you at the closing scene, may be previously known. Men generally die as they live. Death is the termination of a race, for glory or perdition, which we are now running. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

II. WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS WHICH THIS KNOWLEDGE IS CALCULATED TO PROMOTE?

1. *Unfeigned gratitude to God.* Our times are in his hand; he distributes them to us; to him we are indebted for the precious seasons, golden moments, and gracious days of visitation, with which we have been favoured. Some whom we have known, have come forth as a flower, but have been suddenly cut down. Others in the very zenith of their pleasures, have vanished from our view: but we are all here present before

God. O what a debt of endless gratitude we owe him ! Who that knows the time can fail to be grateful ?

2. *Deep contrition of soul.* A knowledge of our time will never fail to remind us how much we have abused it. What hours have been spent in unnecessary sleep,—in sinful amusements, in unprofitable conversation, and perhaps in reiterated acts of sin ? Who that knows his time can help thinking how much he might have done for himself to promote his own personal, spiritual, and eternal interests ; how much he might have done for others, for his family, or the church to which he belongs ; and, above all, how much he might have done to promote the glory of God ? And will not such reflections as these excite deep penitential sorrow ? such “ sorrow as worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.”

3. *Fervent application to the throne of grace.* By knowing the time, we shall know how much we need an interest in the Divine mercy,—in the blood of the atonement,—and in the advocacy of our great High Priest. Our murdered moments have carried in their report at the bar of God, whither they might have borne more welcome news ; the record of crime and guilt we cannot cancel ; but we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous ; to his throne we are invited and emboldened to come ; none need despair,—he pleads for us, and cannot plead in vain.

4. *Sincere desires to live more fully unto the Lord.* You who know time, have estimated its *brevery*, and its *uncertainty* ;—you perceive that every day brings you nearer to its termination ;—that “ now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed.” And with these views, your desires are excited to say, “ Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord ; whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord’s.”

APPLICATION :—

1. *Inquire*,—Have you a knowledge of time ? *You*, whose hoary heads proclaim your lengthened years ; *you* have had many opportunities of studying time ; you have seen it in all its variety of aspect ; but do you know enough of it to induce you to prize,—to improve,—and to apply it to practical purposes ? *You* young people who are looking forward to years of pleasure ; oh, “ Remember your Creator *now* in the days of

your youth." This is the way to real pleasure, and joys for evermore,

2. *Exhort.*—Let us all begin the new year with renewed zeal. Let us thank God, and take courage. Humility for the past,—gratitude for the present,—and hope and confidence in God for the future, should animate our souls. He "hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, and in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."

BETA.

XCI. THE RICHES OF THE CHRISTIAN.

1 CORINTHIANS iii. 21—23.

"Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

THE church of Corinth was divided into factions, each of which professed to love and admire one particular preacher, who was preferred to the utter exclusion of every other. To be more attached to one minister than to another is natural, in some cases unavoidable, and perfectly innocent. Such attachment arises from various causes.—From an agreement between the *taste* of the *hearer*, and the *manner* of the *preacher*.—From admiration of his intellectual powers, and his great theological knowledge, —From his eminent spirituality,—From the great edification derived from his ministry. Such preference may be perfectly innocent, or it may not. If it produce *contempt* of all other ministers, it is highly offensive to Him, whose ministers they are. Such was the sin of the Corinthians. '*I am of Paul.*—I admire a learned minister, of a clear, strong, and logical mind; such is Paul.—I will hear no one else.' '*I am of Apollos.*—I love a fine person, a musical voice, and graceful action; such is Apollos.—I will hear no one else.' '*I am of Cephas.*—Logic, and the tinsel of oratory, I care nothing for; I love a zealous, plain, lively preacher, who deals in blunt un-

adorned truth; such is Cephas.—I will hear him, and no one else.’ The apostle severely reproves them for their sin and folly;—their *sin* in *idolizing* any individual; and their *folly* in *depriving* themselves of the benefits of the various gifts which God had bestowed upon his ministers; “Let no man glory in men, for all things are yours,” &c. Our text contains an inventory of the Christian’s property:—Let us,

I. OFFER A FEW REMARKS ON THE MANNER OF ITS CONVEYANCE, AND THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS TO WHOM IT IS CONVEYED. -

1. *It is conveyed from God to Christ.* To Christ as Mediator, uniting in his person the divine and human natures. It was predicted that the government should be upon his shoulder, Isaiah ix. 6. This was fulfilled; for all things were delivered to Christ, Matt. xi. 27. *The government of the church is vested in him*; hence he is its *supreme Lawgiver*, Matt. xxiii. 8. He appoints its ministers and ordinances. He renders their ministrations effectual. The government of the world is vested in him; hence it is entirely at his disposal, and nothing can occur in any part of it without his permission. The present and the future are alike under his control.—“All fullness of power and influence are treasured up in Christ,” John i. 16.

2. *It is conveyed from Christ to Christians.* Christ holds in trust for the benefit of those who “are Christ’s.” These are redeemed by his blood, Eph. i. 7; 1 Pet. i. 18—Quickened by his influence, Eph. ii. 1.—Justified by his grace, Rom. iii. 24.—Regenerated and sanctified by his Spirit, Eph. v. 26, 27. They believe his truth, feel his influence, obey his precepts, and copy his example.

II. EXAMINE ITS VARIOUS ITEMS.

1. *The various gifts of Christian ministers are given for the benefit of the church*—not for their own individual emolument or honour, but for the benefit of others. These gifts are adapted to the intellectual and moral condition of those to whom they minister. Many people are profoundly ignorant. To these are sent ministers who dwell chiefly upon the first principles of religion. They give milk to babes, 1 Cor. iii. 2. Some are better informed. To such are appointed ministers who are well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, who refute infidel objections, harmonize apparent discordances, remove obscu-

rities, explain and enforce christian duties, and unfold the great and precious promises of the gospel. They give meat and not milk; and lead them on to perfection in christian knowledge. These gifts are also adapted to the constitutional temperament of those to whom they are sent. Some are accessible only by the passion of fear. To these are sent Boanerges, sons of thunder. These chiefly dwell on the terrible; on the holiness of the law; the solemnities of a future judgment, the horrors of damnation. Under such a ministry they tremble. Others are accessible chiefly by the passion of love. To these are sent Barnabas, a son of consolation; who dwells principally on the love of Christ, manifested in his death, his intercession, his invitations, and promises.

2. *The world is for their benefit.* But for the church the world would be destroyed. It is the scaffold which God uses in raising a temple of living stones in which he is to be eternally worshipped, the theatre in which he is to perform the wonderful operations of his grace. When these are performed, the "earth and the things thereof shall be burnt up." They alone properly enjoy the world. Others abuse it. They have just that portion of it which is for their good. Sometimes they think otherwise. But he who loves them would not withhold more from them if he did not know that it would be injurious.

3. *Life is for their benefit.* In life they obtain a meetness for "the inheritance of the saints." In life they co-operate with Christ in promoting the accomplishment of his merciful purposes in the salvation of the world. In life they sow seed which will spring up to everlasting life, Gal. vi. 8. The longer the seed time, and the more the seed sown, the greater and more glorious will be the harvest. 2. Cor. ix. 6.

4. *Death is for their benefit.* To the wicked death is an enemy and a curse, to the Christian a friend and a blessing. It terminates all his sufferings. The pilgrim ends his journey. The warrior retires victorious from the field of blood. The tempest-tost mariner enters a peaceful harbour. It introduces him to the presence of Christ, and the joy of heaven; where his knowledge shall be made perfect, his purity shall be spotless, his communion with God shall be uninterrupted, his salvation shall be complete.

5. *Things present and things to come are for their benefit.*

All things, Romans viii. 28. Prosperity, adversity, praise, persecution, providence, grace, death, resurrection, judgment, heaven.

Conclusion.

1. If all these belong to the Christian, it is a reproach to him to be the subject of murmuring and complaint.

2. If such be his treasures, he is the happiest of men.

3. But as none of these can be enjoyed without we are Christ's, it behoves us seriously to inquire whether we are joined to the Lord. Examine yourselves. If at present strangers to him, draw near, he will not cast you out.

OMEGA.

XCII. THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER A CHRISTIAN DUTY.

I CORINTHIANS V. 7, 8.

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

THE age of the apostles has sometimes been styled the golden age of Christianity. On many accounts it stands entitled to this high character. Then men became Christians, not because Christianity was the religion of the state, or because their predecessors were Christians, but from a conviction of its Divine origin, truth, and excellence. Then they placed religion not in mere morality, or in the external observance of the institutions of Christianity, but in the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Then the preachers of the gospel were alike eminent for piety, zeal, and gifts, workmen needing not to be ashamed. But even that age was not all gold;—there was some dross. False teachers crept in privily, and brought with them damnable doctrines. One of these, during the absence of St. Paul, had found his

way into the Corinthian Church. He preached another gospel. The demoralizing influence of such preaching was soon visible in the licentiousness of one of the members. The apostle ordered his excommunication, reminding them that vice is contaminating; "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Here he alludes to the Jewish passover; *then* all leaven was to be removed from their houses; *here* all sin from our hearts. "Purge out therefore," &c.

Our text teaches us three things,

I. THAT CHRIST CRUCIFIED IS THE TRUE PASSOVER, OF WHICH THE JEWISH WAS A TYPE. For an account of the Jewish passover, read Exodus, chap. xii. Several things here demand attention.

1. *The passover was of Divine appointment.* It did not originate with Moses and Aaron, or any of the elders or people of Israel. It was not the offspring of human policy, but of God, verse 1. So its antitype originated neither with angels nor men, but with God. It was neither in the *power* nor *wisdom* of man to devise and execute a plan by which the Divine attributes could be harmonized, and the sinner saved. But that which man could not do, God has done.

2. *The passover was appointed for the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage and death.* They were slaves oppressed with labour, tormented with cruelty, Exodus i. 11—14. The Lord heard their cry, and stretched out his hand to save: so Christ's death was intended to deliver mankind from the slavery, guilt, love, pollution, and punishment of sin;—to lead from spiritual Egypt to the heavenly Jerusalem.

3. *The passover would benefit none unless the blood were applied,* verse 7 and 13. So also the death of Christ will profit us nothing, unless through faith we become the personal subjects of its mystical application,—*to our consciences*, "in purging them from dead works," Heb. ix. 14;—*to our hearts*, in cleansing them from all sin, 1 John i. 7.

4. *The passover was not only to be slain, and its blood sprinkled, but it was also to be eaten;* see the 8th and following verses. So we must eat the flesh of the Son of God, John vi. 53.—Spiritual life is sustained by Christ,—by furnishing the understanding with instruction and motives,—and by pouring grace into the heart to act upon the *will*,—to raise the *affections*,

—to purify the *heart*,—and to produce *power* to please God.—Christ is indeed our passover.

II. THAT AS THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER WAS TO BE CELEBRATED BY THE JEWS, SO THE EUCHARIST OR LORD'S SUPPER IS TO BE CELEBRATED BY CHRISTIANS. The Jews were to celebrate it,—all the Jews and proselytes, Exodus xii. 47, 48 ;—but none else, verse 43 ;—it was to be celebrated as long as their dispensation should continue, verse 24 ; as a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, verse 27. So the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated by all Christians, all who receive Christ as their Lord and Master, who make his word the rule of their faith and practice, who propose his glory as the object of their desire, and who, deeply conscious of the deceitfulness and weakness of the human heart, rely continually and implicitly upon Christ for the promised aid of the Holy Spirit to enable them to *will* and to *do* of his good pleasure. Those who are not Christians have no right to it; Christ appointed it for his disciples only, Luke xxii. 14, &c. Its being celebrated as a political test to qualify for civil offices is an awful profanation of the ordinance, and ranks among our national sins. But *all* Christians ought to celebrate it,

1. *Because Christ has commanded it*, Luke xxii. 19. Whatever he has commanded must be implicitly obeyed. To refuse obedience in any case because we do not perceive the necessity of the things enjoined, is totally to reject the authority of Him who commands, and to make our obedience depend upon our perception of the fitness of the thing commanded.

2. *Because it keeps alive the important doctrine of salvation through the death of Christ.* The death of Christ is not to be viewed as an *ordinary* event, nor as the death of a martyr; but as a propitiation for sin, Rom. iii. 25. Our Lord's words perfectly agree with this view, and explicitly teach this doctrine so long as this rite is performed, so long will the doctrine of Christ's sacrificial death be received in the church.

3. *Because it eminently tends to excite holy affections.*—*Godly sorrow*, arising from a conviction that our sins, in common with those of others, occasioned the sufferings and death of Christ. *Ardent love to Christ.* Love begets love; remember its greatness as manifested in his incarnation, preaching, labour, suffering, death, resurrection, intercession, gift of the Holy

Ghost,—and all the blessings of the christian dispensation. *Grateful obedience.* Love is a constraining principle ; it delights in doing the *will*, and copying the *example* of him whom we love. As the passover was to be an ordinance to the Jews for ever, so the Lord's Supper is to be perpetuated in the christian church to the end of time ; 1 Cor. xi. 26.

III. THAT IN ORDER TO ITS ACCEPTABLE CELEBRATION SEVERAL THINGS DEMAND ATTENTION.

1. *We should have correct views of its nature.* A fondness for mystery has led the Romish and Greek churches to interpret literally, what can only be metaphorically understood. Hence the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation. To the same source is the consubstantiation of Lutheranism to be traced. Neither the body nor blood of Christ is any more in the Lord's Supper, than the body and blood of the paschal lamb slain in Egypt in the time of Moses, was in the passover celebrated by our Lord and his apostles in Jerusalem. In both cases the ordinances are merely *commemorative* rites.

2. *We should not ascribe an efficiency to it which it does not possess.* Many substitute it in the place of regeneration. Hence the vilest debauchee when he thinks himself dying sends for a minister to come and give him the sacrament,—having received it, he concludes his peace is made with God, and in this horrible delusion expires. Ministers should never administer it to any person without explaining its nature, and showing that it is not a *Saviour*, but, like prayer, and hearing the gospel, a *means* of salvation.

3. *We should celebrate it with suitable dispositions.* *Not with malice* ; for here we commemorate not malice but love, love to the worthless, love to enemies, love where wrath and indignation had been merited. *Not with wickedness* ; for here we read God's aversion to wickedness of every kind, his method of removing it, and our obligation to universal holiness. *But with sincerity and truth*, with purity of intention, and with an agreement between our principles and outward profession.

Conclude by answering a few objections.

1. *I dare not keep the feast for it is a solemn ordinance.* For the same reason you should neither pray, read the Scriptures, sing God's praises, nor hear his gospel preached ; for they are solemn.

2. *I am not prepared to receive it.* If you have not made up your mind to forsake sin, dare not to approach the table; but if you are resolved to be the servant of Christ, draw near.

3. *I have kept the feast formerly, but since then I have relapsed into sin.* Let this humble you, but let it no more hinder you from coming to the table, than from approaching the throne of grace.

OMEGA.

XCIH. BEHOLDING THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

2 CORINTHIANS iii. 18.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

It has been recorded of a celebrated unbeliever, that he used to say, “It is better for a man to be born to look at the bright side of things, than to an estate of a thousand a year.” And, certainly, a cheerful disposition is not a trifling blessing. It blunts the edge of affliction, and lightens the load of trouble to which a man is born; while it heightens and improves all the innocent pleasures of life. Over the sterile gloom of December it sheds the freshness and the promise of Spring; and gives us at once the full enjoyment of the present, and the most pleasing anticipation of the future. The principles of infidelity, however, do not appear calculated to support this cheerful temper; for they admit of no atonement by which man may acceptably approach his offended God: and as to our condition when the present fleeting life shall be over, they leave us in dark and painful uncertainty; and point us either to the wide-yawning gulf of annihilation, or to an eternity of woe, the punishment of sins unpardoned. But Christianity supplies what, in this, as in every other respect, our necessities require. It furnishes the pious and practical believer with both prospect and possession of pure and exalted felicity. Even his affliction, which is but light and momentary, worketh for him “a far

more exceeding and eternal weight of glory : ” and now, “ we all, with open face, as in a glass, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed,” &c. Our thoughts on this passage may be thrown into a few propositions.

I. THE GOSPEL IS A DISPENSATION OF PECULIAR LIGHT AND PRIVILEGE. “ We, beholding *the glory of the Lord.* ” Observe the scope of the chapter, which was evidently intended to show the infinite superiority of the gospel to the law ; which, although “ glorious,” is thrown into the shade “ by reason of the glory that excelleth,” verse 10. Here are several things which may very properly be brought into contrast with each other ; as,

1. *The object beheld* ; — “ the glory of the Lord.” This is opposed to the glory of the countenance of Moses, verse 7. Both Moses and Jesus are to be considered in their official characters ; but the latter is superior to the former, as a son to a servant, Heb. i. 1, 2. Jesus is “ the Saviour,” “ the Prince of Peace,” and we are allowed to see the glory of God in *his* face ; while he sustains for us that important character, chapter iv. 4—6.

2. *The manner of beholding* ; with *open, or unveiled* face ; which is opposed to that in which the Israelites beheld the face of Moses, verse 13. Whether the veil be considered as being on the face of the beholder, or on that of the person beheld, it was still interposed between the beholder and the object ; and obscured, and in the case of Moses was intended to obscure, its glory, Exod. xxxiv. 30—33. But we behold without a veil, *clearly*. In this place we may notice the gradual revelation of “ the glory of God’s grace,” (Ephes. i. 6.) by means of promise, sacrifice, legal ceremonies, prophecy, &c., till types and shadows gave place to reality, and promise and prophecy received their accomplishment. Heb. viii. 1, 2, ix. 6—12, and x. 1—10.

3. *Strength, and steadiness, and vision* ; “ We all *beholding*,” &c., in opposition to what is said, verse 7. “ The children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance.” That was a glory which terrified, overpowered, repelled ; this invites, invigorates, comforts, &c. Heb. xii. 18, 21, 24.

4. *The character of the glory.* That of Moses was a waning

transient glory, "which was to be done away," verse 7; this permanent and improving, "glory to glory."

II. YET, WITH ALL THESE ADVANTAGES, THE PRESENT IS A STATE OF COMPARATIVE IMPERFECTION. "We behold, *as in a mirror* darkly," 1 Cor. xiii. 12. A mirror does not return to the eye *all* the rays that fall on it: metal, such as was anciently used for this purpose, reflects less than glass; and if there be any defect in the regularity or polish of the surface, of course the image will be the less distinct and vivid. Now God reveals himself as man can bear, Exod. xxxiii. 20; accordingly we see his glory, as the God of *providence* and of *grace*, not *directly*, but tempered, softened, by reflection. And if there should appear to be in it a few slight shades, or any thing not exactly defined, respecting the introduction, expiation, &c., of *moral*, or the distribution, &c., of *natural* evil, we may attribute the *apparent* imperfection to the following (among other) causes. 1. This is, by Divine appointment, *our state of probation*; therefore we have to exercise faith, patience, submission, &c. 2. It is *our state of infancy*, in which we "know but in part;" so that we are peculiarly incapable of grasping the vast and variously-operating economy of grace and providence. 3. Our attention is often *diverted* from the object of our contemplation. And 4. Our tumultuous passions produce an *agitation*; and our prejudices in favour of ourselves and our favourites, and against others, raise a smoke and dust which prevent clear and perfect vision.

III. NEVERTHELESS THE VIEW WHICH IS PERMITTED US PRODUCES VERY POWERFUL EFFECTS. "We, beholding, *are changed*." In physical nature, "like begets its like." We follow *fashion*, and *imitate* those we admire, take their habits, &c. So in morals and intellectual matters. In the present case, the glory is not intercepted by a veil, as in that of Moses, but reflected on us; and the rays of excellence of which it is composed—love, pity, meekness, &c., affect, and charm, and change us "into the same image."

IV. THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGES AUTHORISE AND REQUIRE A GROWTH IN GRACE. "We are changed from *glory to glory*." On this subject we remark, 1. Experience teaches that our powers are strengthened and improved by proper exercise, Heb. v. 14. 2. To such exercise God gives his blessing, Matt. xxv.

15—22. 3. Consequently we discover more and more of the perfection of the glory we behold. At first, the pardoned sinner is particularly and chiefly struck with the Saviour's love, as manifested in his suffering and dying for him. Afterwards he observes more of his rectitude, purity, love of justice, regard to moral order, &c., and, by more comprehensive and accurate views of the scheme and necessity of redemption, his mind is more informed, and his heart more reformed, till "filled with all the fulness of God." Eph. iii. 18, 19.

V. THE RENOVATION OF MAN IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST. "We are changed, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." He displays the *object of vision*; glorifying Christ by showing his excellence to us, John xv. 26, and xvi. 14, 15. He furnishes the *instrument of vision*; the written and published testament; the gospel glass, 2 Tim. iii. 16; the *sense or faculty of vision*, 1 Cor. ii. 14; and the *medium of vision*, light. He, as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, *enlightens*; when God shines into the heart, to give the *light of the knowledge of his own glory* in the face of Jesus Christ, Eph. i. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 6. So that, in every respect, we may affirm, "Salvation is of the Lord."

At what are we looking? At the glory of the world? Its all is vanishing, 1 Cor. vii. 31; 1 Peter i. 24. Or does Satan gild his deformities and the vices to which he tempts you with the appearances of excellence, so as to make covetousness appear like prudence? &c. And does he throw something like a glory over sinful "innocent amusements?" It is only the livid gleaming of infernal fire.

Invite all to "taste and see that the Lord is gracious." In order to our seeing his glory, it is necessary, not only that there be the proper object, and reflection, and position, and light, and organs; but those organs must be *exercised*.

And let us who have only occasionally *looked*, and have therefore been only slightly and transiently affected, henceforth *behold, steadily and constantly*, till we awake with his likeness, and be satisfied, Psalm xvii. 15. So, when he shall come to be "*glorified* in his saints," we shall appear with him, and be like him, in glory, Phil. iii. 20, 21; Col. iii. 4; 1 John iii. 2.

ZETA.

XCIV. THE FATHER'S CHARGE.

EPHESIANS VI. 4.

“ And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath : but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

IF we consider our state and circumstances in the world, we cannot fail to be reminded, that we all stand in a twofold relation. We are related to God in an absolute sense, as creatures are related to their Creator ; and in a subordinate sense, we are related to each other, as husbands and wives, parents and children. And from every relation in life, there are duties and obligations which necessarily arise, the performance of which is of the utmost importance to the happiness of man, and the well-being of society. From the indissoluble relation in which we stand to God, spring the duties of love, reverence, and obedience : and from the connection which we have with each other arise obligations, which, though of minor importance, are yet of essential utility. The text is addressed to fathers, a class of men who fill most responsible stations in the world ; and on whose conduct the tone of morals, through all the gradations of society, most essentially depend. There can be, therefore, no impropriety in addressing such individuals from the pulpit. Two things claim their attention :—

I. THE DUTIES WHICH PARENTS OWE TO THEIR CHILDREN.

II. THE OBLIGATIONS THEY ARE UNDER TO PRACTICE THOSE DUTIES.

The duties which parents owe to their children may be distinctly understood, by adverting to the circumstances in which children are placed on their introduction into the world.

1. *Children are weak and helpless, and totally incapable of caring for themselves ;* and hence arises the first duty which parents owe them, that of feeding and clothing them. The weakness of infancy is proverbial. See the helplessness of little children ; Oh ! how mean and degraded is our origin ! There is scarcely an animal in existence, that has not, in this

sense, the advantage of man. Parents must feed their children. How pitiable are the circumstances of those parents, whose extreme indigence precludes the possibility of their performing towards their offspring the first duty in nature. Children should be fed, not pampered. The plainest food is the most wholesome, and the most nutritious. The children of the poor, who are fed on the coarsest food, and clothed with the coarsest raiment, or scarcely clothed at all, are the very pictures of health; the rosy cheeks, the sprightly features, the vigorous constitution, all unite to proclaim the utility of plain food and fare.

2. *Children are ignorant, and without understanding*; hence they should not only be fed but taught. The mind of an infant is a perfect blank, devoid of all intelligence, and even unconscious of its being; but in proportion as the capacities of children expand, and their minds are rendered capable of receiving knowledge, they should be instructed; and who so proper to teach children as parents? This is the doctrine of the text; nurture and admonition signify discipline and instruction. Children should be taught *early*; it is scarcely possible to begin too soon: *familiarly*, according to their comprehension: *affectionately*, show them by your conduct how deeply you are interested in their welfare: *extensively*, whatever concerns their duty; such as propriety of conduct, consistency of character, and purity of principle; all that the Bible enjoins of the doctrines of faith, the fruits of experience, and the rules of moral conduct.

3. *Children are unruly, and therefore must be governed*. This duty devolves upon parents. Children are fond of having their own way, and acting according to their own will; and nothing is more difficult than to conquer that headstrong obstinacy which is common to children. But they must be governed and brought into subjection; and it is as much the duty of parents to govern their children, as it is to feed or clothe them. The dispositions of children vary exceedingly; some may be governed by love, others must be subdued by fear; this makes correction necessary, Prov. xix. 18, xxix. 15; Heb. xii. 9.

4. *Children are prone to evil, and therefore must be restrained*. Eli's sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not; he mildly reprov'd them when he ought to have effectually restrained them; and for this, God punished him

with the extirpation of his whole race. Oh ! if God were to deal thus with every parent who treads in the steps of Eli, how many families would have their names cut off from the earth ! There are many parents who encourage both by precept and example the practice of evil in their children ; who let them go where they will, and do what they will, without control or restraint. Having briefly hinted at the duties which parents owe to their children, let us notice,

II. THE OBLIGATIONS THEY ARE UNDER TO PRACTISE THOSE DUTIES.

1. *They should do it for their own sakes*—For the credit of their own characters. What greater disgrace can attach to a parent, than the neglect of his children ? To take no pains to cultivate their minds, to improve their manners, or to save their souls ? For their *personal comfort* ; how loud and bitter are the complaints uttered by parents against their children, and how deep the anguish endured on their account ! Children may become sources of unspeakable pleasure, or occasions of grievous torment to their parents ; but a vast proportion of the misery which they endure originates in the criminal neglect of their offspring.

2. *They should do it for their children's sake.* We take it for granted that parents love their children, but how do they manifest that love ? Perhaps by letting them have their way ; that is, in other words, permitting them to go quietly to the devil. Perhaps by leaving them large property ; that is providing food for their pride, and poison for their souls. To bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, is to do what we can to make them *wise*, to make them *good*, and to make them *happy*.

3. *They should do it for society's sake.* The children of the present age will be the men and women of the future age ; and the morals of society half a century hence, will depend, as far as human calculations can go, on the manner in which parents now bring up their children. The seed which is now sown will then be ripened for the harvest. Those who neglect to practise the advice in the text, not only accelerate the ruin of their children, but do their utmost to make them nuisances and pests to society, wherever their lot may be cast.

4. *They should do it for God's sake.* Children are an heri-

tage of the Lord; they are his property; he is the Father of their spirits; but he puts them under the care of their earthly parents, and they are to train them up for him, that they may know, love, and serve him all their days.

CONCLUSION.

1. Learn how careful the apostles were to instruct their converts, not only in the matters of faith, but rules of conduct; descending even to the most particular duties of domestic life.

2. The practicability of a religious education. What is here enjoined is possible to be done. Children may be "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." There may be a thousand petty shifts and subterfuges, to which ignorant and idle parents may resort to palliate their sins; but the inference from the text is plain.

3. How awful is the responsibility of parents, fathers especially.—*Ye fathers*, the text is God's voice to you; O hear it, reverence it, put it in practice!

BETA.

XCV. ST. PAUL'S GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THE PIETY, AND HIS CONFIDENT HOPE OF THE FINAL SALVATION OF THE PHILIPPIANS.

PHILIPPIANS i. 3—7.

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."

THE experience and prayers of Christians, and especially of Christian ministers, are considerably influenced by the state of the church. If pernicious and dangerous errors be adopted, or

11. unholy practices prevail among its members, they feel like the apostle, when he said, "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ!—whose end is destruction." But if truth and righteousness prevail; if "the unity of the Spirit be kept in the bond of peace;" if there be no wrath nor bitterness; no strife, but a striving together for the faith of the gospel; no provocation, but "to love and to good works;"—*then* their prayers are not mixed with lamentations and fearful apprehensions, but with joy. Reviewing the past, they are grateful; anticipating the future, they are delighted with the animating prospect of presenting their charge "faultless before the throne of God." Such were the feelings of the apostle in relation to the Philippians.

I am going to call your attention to St. Paul's remembrance of that church; and to his confident hope of their final salvation.

I. ST. PAUL'S REMEMBRANCE OF THE CHURCH.

1. *His remembrance was grateful.* He thanked his God,—his God, the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of all mankind, in opposition to the gods of the Gentiles, by whom nothing is made, nothing preserved, nothing blessed. His God, who is omniscient, and therefore knows all things; omnipotent, and therefore can save his own people, and punish his enemies; self-existent, and therefore dependent upon none, while universal nature is dependent upon him; in opposition to the idols of paganism, who were alike destitute of knowledge, of power, and of consciousness. His God, infinitely holy and just. In opposition to the imaginary divinities of heathenism, who were little better than the mere personifications of cruelty and licentiousness. Hence the impure and sanguinary rites of the latter, and the simple and holy rites of the former. His God, reconciled through Christ, 2 Cor. v. 18; enthroned in his heart, Rom. vi. 14;—to whom he had avowed eternal obedience, Phil. i. 21.—Happy to be able to look up, and for reasons like these to be able to say, *My God!*—He *thanks* his God. He knew that the gifts and graces of the Philippians were not of their own creation, that God had bestowed them, that he had bestowed them not as a debt, but a favour, Rom. iv. 4; therefore he acknowledges them not with the cold formality of a creditor,

but with the ardent feelings of one who contemplated a great and unmerited act of grace.

2. *His remembrance was joyous.* Some people can never be remembered without pity, grief, or horror. If joy mix in these recollections, it is that we are beyond the sphere of their influence. It is like the joy of one who has been delivered from the lion or the bear. St. Paul's was not of this kind, he remembered their faith, unity, zeal, and courage. He had seen the grace of God among them, and was glad.

3. *His remembrance was devotional.* He remembered them in every prayer. St. Paul was a man of prayer. There is no piety without prayer; prayer is the breath of the soul; and animal life might as soon be sustained without breathing, as spiritual life without prayer. Where there is much piety there is much prayer. St. Paul was eminently pious, and prayed without ceasing. The Scriptures bear ample testimony to the efficacy of the prayers of the pious; Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 24—28. Moses, Exod. xvii. 11. Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 36—38. Job, Job xlii. 8. Confirmatory of all this it is written, "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much," James v. 16. A celebrated queen was more afraid of the prayers of the Scottish Reformer, John Knox, than of all the Scottish forces. A greater than Knox remembered the Philippians in every prayer. But why did he thus gratefully, joyously, and piously remember them? For their *fellowship* in the Gospel. Fellowship includes two ideas:

1. *Union or agreement.* For this they were eminent. The unity of the Spirit, which other churches were exhorted to keep, they had actually kept; questions about Jewish rites, which had disturbed the peace of other societies, had never injured them; they were of one mind and heart.

2. *Communion or participation.* They participated,
(1.) *In the support of the gospel; by pecuniary aid.* Christ set apart some of his servants exclusively to the work of the ministry. He ordained that such should live of the gospel; the Philippians heartily entered into his plan; the poor contributed as well as the rich. They not only supported the work at home, but at a distance also, Phil. iv. 15, 16. By their consistent piety. Every member of a religious society either hinders or promotes the work of God. If carnally minded, he

offends God, afflicts the minds of the pious, chills their fervour, spreads a sickly pestilential vapour over those with whom he associates, and lays a stumbling-block in the way of sinners. If spiritually minded, his temper, his conversation, his influence, are all consecrated to the increase of religion in the world. They participate,

(2.) *In the enjoyment of its privileges.* Christianity is not like heathenism. They both have their mysteries; in the latter, the poor are excluded from their knowledge; in the former, all, whether poor or rich, are alike admitted. They alike contemplate the great mystery of godliness, 1 Tim. iii. 16; and alike enjoy mysterious communion with God, 1 John i. 3. The feast of fat things, they are called equally to partake of, Isaiah xxv. 6.

II. ST. PAUL'S CONFIDENT HOPE OF THEIR FINAL SALVATION. That the work begun would be performed until the day of Jesus Christ. But, before we show the foundation of this hope, let us,

1. *Explain the work.* It is the work of peace in the soul, operating in the understanding, conscience, affections, will, memory, and in the whole life.

2. *Describe its character.* It is a good work. Good, inasmuch as it is the object which God had in view in that most transcendent display of infinite goodness, the gift of his Son Heb. ii. 10. Good, as it respects its subject. It tranquillizes the conscience, elevates that which is low, purifies that which is depraved. Good, as it regards others. Christians are blessings to others, lights to illuminate, salt to season, leaven, whose influence is intended to extend to all.

3. *Shows its author.* It is no part of our common nature, which "grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength." It is not produced by education; but is the effect of Divine influence; in its commencement, continuance, and completion. St. Paul confidently hoped in their final salvation: for this he had strong reasons.

(1.) He knew it to be *God's will to carry it on*; had he not, he would not have begun it; he had pardoned the rebel, surely he would save the child. Rom. v. 8, 9:

(2.) Their faith had been tried, and found good, verse 7. It was hardly possible that they could be placed in more dan-

gerous circumstances than those in which they had stood. When comparatively raw recruits they had conquered; how much more might be expected of veterans.

Conclude with a few words,

1. *Of inquiry.* Is the work begun? Is it in progress in you?

2. *Of admonition.* Let not St. Paul's hope, in reference to the Philippians, hurl you into a fatal security. Watch and pray; work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

OMEGA.

XXVI. ST. PAUL'S LOVE TO THE PHILIPPIANS, AND HIS PRAYER ON THEIR BEHALF, CON- SIDERED AND EXPLAINED.

PHILIPPIANS i. 8—11.

"For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

THE whole economy of human redemption originated and is carried on in love. God loved the world, and gave his Son; Christ loved the world, and gave himself. Love prompted all those benevolent acts which distinguished his character. It prompted his kindness to his disciples, in instructing, admonishing, reproofing, comforting. It prompted his sympathy with the wretched. His ear never turned away from the voice of misery. He wept with those that wept; banished the causes of their grief; tranquillized their minds; and sent them away

rejoicing. It prompted his mercy towards his enemies. He spared their lives, prayed for their pardon, and died to procure it. The same spirit was manifested by his apostles. This originated their zeal in propagating Christianity ;—particularly exemplified in the life of St. Paul. Our text furnishes an instance. Let us consider,

I. ST. PAUL'S LOVE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

1. *It was genuine.* It did not consist in mere profession. It is much to be lamented, that even in his day there was but too much of the latter. We have reason to fear that it is no better now. Hence the incense which is so often offered to the great. Hence the fulsome compliments which are paid to equals. Hence the mere verbal sympathy expressed to inferiors. The whole is in word only. St. Paul's was of another kind. It had its seat in the heart, manifested itself in the life, and was recorded on high.

2. *It was ardent.* He longed for them greatly. Love admits of various degrees. A philanthropist loves the whole human race, because they are of the same species with himself. He loves the inhabitants of his own country better than those of distant lands, because to a *natural*, there is added a *civil* relation. He loves the inhabitants of his own city, or town, or village, better than those of other places, because to natural and civil relations are added *local* attachments. But his own immediate family he loves most, because in addition to the other reasons, in this case are added the strong and tender ties of consanguinity. St. Paul was a philanthropist of the highest order. He loved the whole world ; especially the church ; more especially that part of it which most resembled Christ. Such were the Philippians.

3. *It was divine ;*—"in the bowels of Jesus Christ." *Like Christ it was spiritual ;* not governed by personal or mental accomplishments, by riches, by family, by office ; but operating independently of any of these considerations. *Like Christ's, it was disinterested.* It has been said that some men enter into the ministry for the sake of filthy lucre. Paul was not like these. Had he been in pursuit of riches, he would have adopted another course. The course he adopted, he knew, led not to gold, but to bonds, imprisonment, and death. But these he regarded not, if he could promote their salvation. *Like*

Christ's, it was operative. It did not consist in verbal lamentations, sympathies, and wishes; but it was love in action; love manifested—"in labours, in fastings, in perils, in imprisonment, in deaths oft." Like Christ's, it was universal. Particular attachments he might have, but these did not hinder his love to all. Whatever variety there might be in their talents and circumstances, he loved them all; for they were all brethren and fellow-heirs.

II. ST. PAUL'S PRAYER.

1. *For the increase of their love.* "That your love may abound." Love is the very essence of religion. Already they were the subjects of love to Christ, to his church, to the world. But love is capable, not only of continuance, but of increase, of endless progression.

2. *For its increase through knowledge and judgment,* or knowledge and sense, or moral feeling. Religion is founded in knowledge. We can neither fear nor love God until we know him; love is an operation of the heart, and may be increased to Christ, his church, and his cause, by—an increase of religious *knowledge*. The more we know of Christ, his person, offices, relations, humiliation, glory, the more powerful will be the motives to love. And by—an increase of religious *feeling*. The more we feel the influence of Christianity on our hearts, in dispelling our guilty fears, in giving us the victory over our spiritual enemies, in supporting us under our difficulties, and in brightening our prospects beyond the grave, the more shall we love its Author, and his truth, and the more zealous shall we be in giving it circulation.

3. *For their approval of things which are excellent.* Their increase of knowledge would enable them to detect error and discern truth. This is highly to be desired; for error is always pernicious; some errors more pernicious than others; some are subtle, and so interwoven with truth, that it requires much knowledge and experience to unravel them. Such knowledge may be obtained by every Christian.

4. *For their sincerity.* The word here rendered *sincere*, is compounded of two words; one signifying the splendour or shining of the sun; the other signifying to judge;—any thing in which no flaw can be seen by the clearest light. What a prayer! That their thoughts, purposes, affections, tempers,

and actions, might all be such as God, "with whom is no darkness," might approve. We can neither pray, nor labour, nor expect, to be too much like Christ.

5. *For their innocence and courtesy.* "That ye may be without offence to the day of Christ." Christians cannot avoid giving offence. The apostles gave offence; Christ gave offence. The prayer must therefore be understood in reference to giving *no just cause of offence*, either to the church or to the world; by a deviation from the truth of Christianity; by a departure from its spirit; by a rude attack on the prejudices of others. Christian courtesy is by many but too little considered.

6. *For their fruitfulness.* "Being filled with the fruits," &c. Remark *its kind*. Not that fruit of which men are ashamed, Rom. vi. 21; but holy fruit, Rom. vi. 22; borne by a justified and renewed soul. *Its abundance*, "Filled." Fruit in the heart and in the life. Not in one period of life, or under one class of circumstances; but at all times, and in all circumstances. *Its growth*. "By Jesus Christ." We are entirely dependent on him for spiritual life and fruitfulness. This is strikingly illustrated in the parable of the vine and the branches, John xv. *Its end*. "Unto the glory and praise of God." To him is the glory of engrafting us into Christ, of perpetuating that union, of increasing our piety, and of honouring us with success in his work.

In conclusion,

1. Let us praise God that we are called to enjoy the same spiritual blessings which were enjoyed by the Philippians.

2. Let us humble ourselves on account of our past unfruitfulness.

3. Let us more than ever enter into the spirit of the apostle's prayer.

OMEGA.

XCVII. THE GOOD WARFARE.

1 TIMOTHY i. 18, 19.

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.”

THE various representations of the Christian life, which are given in Scripture, afford us sufficient encouragement. But every one of them also conveys the idea of *activity*; and most of them denote *vigorous exertion*. Would we enjoy the “meat that endureth?” We must *labour*. Is the kingdom of heaven “like unto a marriage feast?” &c. We must “*strive* to enter in,” &c. Do we covet eternal life, and an incorruptible crown? Then, after the example of those who contended in the Grecian games, we must “so *run* as to obtain;” must “*fight* the good fight of faith;” and *wrestle* against principalities, &c. But in no case are these remarks more clearly exemplified, than in those passages which exhibit the Christian in a *militant* state. In reference to this, the apostle, in one place, speaks of “the weapons of our warfare;” in another, exhorts us to “take the whole armour of God;” and in our text, charges Timothy, and through him, charges us, that we “*war a good warfare*,” &c. Thus he reminds the Christian of his present condition, and of his constant duty. We therefore notice,

I. THE CHRISTIAN’S PRESENT STATE,—a *warfare*; a *good warfare*.

1. *Warfare*. This always supposes enemies; these may be engaged in *open* and *avowed hostility*. Such is Satan, when he appears a roaring lion; and powerfully assaults our irascible passions; or urges us to blasphemy, or any other thing *evidently* diabolical: such our ungodly relatives or superiors, when they *threaten* us with the loss of their favour; or of property; or liberty; or life. Enemies may, however sometimes wear the appearance of neutrality, or even of friendship; while they furnish the foe with information and supplies; lull us into fancied security and false confidence; and wait an opportunity to inflict

a deeper wound. This Satan does, when transformed into an angel of light; he would impose on us the form of godliness, instead of the power; zeal for our party, instead of zeal for truth; warmth of natural temper, and joy of our success, instead of "love to God, and joy in the Holy Ghost," &c. Such are the men of the world, when they "flatter our vanity," &c., treacherously offer their assistance, friendship, and advice; and mislead us by their evil maxims, formed by the grand enemy, intended to soothe us into unwatchfulness, non-resistance, and ruin. Such *the pleasing things of the world*; they offer themselves for our enjoyment; promise nothing but happiness; but while they so plausibly tender their services, they appeal to yet another set of secret enemies; our corrupt principles within; "the *flesh*, with its affections and lusts." These also *propose* only our ease and comfort. Now, an intercourse between these sworn allies, however it may please the *man*, enervates and destroys the *soldier*; and of all enemies, those within the citadel are the most dangerous; and therefore should excite our most scrupulous jealousy. In this war, our foes in general intend no accommodation, afford no quarter; hence the word is not *treat* but *fight*. We have only to choose *victory* or *death*. But it is,

2. *A good warfare.* This designation refers to the *objects* of the war; every war has some object. The *real* object of war may be an unjust extension of territory, or monopoly of commerce; the depression of a rival state; the aggrandizement of an individual; the establishment of despotism, &c.; but as every one wishes his cause to appear good, the *professed* object usually is, to recover lost liberty and privileges; or to repel an unjust invasion of rights; or to assist others in one, or other, or both these righteous causes. The Christian war embraces them *all*. Satan *has* reduced mankind to slavery; deprived them of the consolations of piety; and cut off their intercourse with the court of heaven. He repeats his outrages; and with the aid to his allies, seeks to *complete* our ruin. We fight, therefore, to *recover* lost privileges; and to defend what remains to ourselves, and to our fellow-soldiers. This designation, a "good warfare," also refers to the *preparation for and conduct of* war. A good cause should be *well appointed*, and have *sufficient resources*. This is planned by unerring wisdom; the Christian fights under a Captain the most experienced and attentive; who has *already*

triumphed over his enemies; and has the stores of nature at his command. Every soldier has access to the armory of God, Eph. vi. 13—18. Angels are his powerful and faithful allies, Heb. i. 14; Ps. ciii. 20; and on petition, he may obtain *necessary supplies* of any kind, to any amount, at any time.

II. THE APOSTLE RECOMMENDS ATTENTION TO DUTY.

“War,” &c., “holding faith,” &c. Different, though not opposite views may be taken of these words. By *faith* we may understand the *grace* of faith, Romans v. 1; or the *word*, the *doctrine* of faith, chapter iii. 9; Gal. i. 23. Both these are necessary; the *grace* of faith sustains and *comforts* the heart, under privations and trials various and severe, Heb. xi. 27. It also *purifies* the heart, and thus *makes* and *preserves* a good conscience. Viewed in this light, conscience may be regarded as a vigilant sentinel, which distinguishes friends from foes; useful from hurtful things; and gives timely and faithful reports. The *word* of faith contains the plan of campaign, and our general instructions. It insists on the *necessity* of the warfare; urges its *prosecution*; furnishes *rules* for conducting the war; teaching us, among other things, 1. To guard against a *sudden* attack. 2. Especially on the *weakest* part. Every one has his propensity, whether to anger, levity, covetousness &c. Here he is weakest; here should be a double guard. 3. To prevent the *co-operation* of our enemies; and therefore, 4. To mortify and crush the enemy within. 5. To fight in unison with our fellow soldiers; and to repel every attack *promptly, vigorously, and perseveringly*. This also exhibits the *motives* to the war; appeals to our *reason*, by the justice of the cause; to *shame*, by the disgrace; and to *fear*, by the ruin of defeat; to *hope*, by the promises of God, and the success of former combatants; *ambition*, by the glory of the most noble conquest, Prov. xvi. 32; and by the goodness and the greatness, and the eternity of the reward. By “faith,” &c., the apostle may allude to the shield and breast-plate. The shield, covered with promises, quenches the “fiery darts,” &c. Or if they strike on a *good* breast-plate, they are repelled; but if the shield be lost, and there be an evil conscience, a corrupt rotten breast-plate, they reach the vitals. Your defence cannot be *taken* from you; *put* it not away.

In application, warn and entreat such as have always fought for Satan; and those who have deserted the good cause; or are

asleep on their post; or at parley with the foe. You who feel the war "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." The *good* cause will have a *glorious* issue. War leads to peace; danger to security; privation to enjoyment, &c.

ZETA.

XCVIII. THE WAY OF SALVATION.

TITUS iii. 5.

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

IF human language presents us with any word with which we should become familiar, any subject we should be concerned to understand, or any enjoyment we should be anxious to realize: that word, that subject, that enjoyment, is salvation. Salvation is the noblest science, the most invaluable acquisition, and the highest happiness. Without salvation, life is a maze of error, death a gulph of horror, and eternity a scene of punishment. Considering how important a part of a minister's duty it is to explain the nature of salvation, to correct the mistakes so common concerning salvation, and to urge upon his hearers the necessity of securing salvation, I cannot do better than recommend the text to your most serious attention. The doctrines contained in it are,

I. THAT SALVATION IS NOT EFFECTED BY HUMAN AGENCY. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," &c. Does this position require evidence? Then consider,

1. *Where there is no salvation, there are no works of righteousness.* Man is a totally depraved creature, "the imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. Where then are his "works of righteousness?" Are works of righteousness the genuine effects of righteous principles? In the carnal mind these principles have no existence. For man "is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always con-

trary to the spirit;" and the works of the flesh are, "adultery, fornication," &c.; Gal. v. 19—21.

2. *Works of righteousness*, even where they exist, *possess no saving effect*. They are the evidences of salvation, and not the causes of it. They show that men are saved, but they do not operate in producing salvation. They accompany salvation, but they do not precede it. Works of righteousness possess no saving efficacy; they can never control one evil thought, conquer one evil habit, nor extirpate one evil temper; nor has God ever saved one sinner by works of righteousness.

3. *The Bible disclaims the merit of human agency in salvation*. Isa. lxiv. 6; Dan. ix. 7; Rom. iii. 20—28; xi. 5, 6; Gal. ii. 21; Eph. ii. 8, 9.

II. THAT SALVATION ORIGINATES IN THE DIVINE COMPASSION. "According to his mercy he saved us," &c. Mercy is a certain modification of love, and is that sensation of mind which inclines us to pity and relieve the subjects of misery.—Love regards pleasing objects, mercy miserable objects. Adam, when he fell from God, plunged himself into misery.—His misery arose from the forfeiture of his original innocence,—from the absence of his God,—from his irregular and depraved passions,—and from the "fearful looking for of judgment and punishment." His salvation could not originate in himself, as he could neither make an atonement for his offence, nor eradicate the principles of corruption which had taken deep root in his nature. Our salvation is according to God's mercy: it,

1. *Accords with the tender sympathies attributed to that mercy*. Read the descriptions which are given of God, Psalm xxv. 6; li. 6; Isaiah lxiii. 15; Luke i. 78; James v. 11. Had man been suffered to perish without an offer of salvation, his destruction might have accorded with the justice of God; but there would have been no perceptible harmony between his punishment and God's tender mercy.

2. *It accords with the readiness ascribed to that mercy*, Nehem. ix. 17. God is represented as being ready to pardon, Isaiah xxx. 18. Waiting to be gracious, Micah, vii. 18; delighting in mercy. O with what readiness did the mercy of God provide a Saviour for man, and with what willingness does the Father run to meet the returning prodigal!

3. *It accords with the descriptions given of the greatness*,

fulness, and extent of that mercy, Numb. xiv. 19 ; we read of “the greatness of God’s mercy,” Ps. v. 7 ; of “the multitude of his mercies,” Nehem. ix. 19 ; of “his manifold mercies,” Ps. cxix. 64 ; the “earth being full of his mercy,” Ps. cxlv. 9. “His tender mercies being over all his works.” Our salvation accords with these descriptions, in the great and tremendous evils from which we are delivered,—in the immensity of blessedness to which we are raised,—in the extended and universal offers made of this salvation to mankind, and in its suitability to the unnumbered necessities of our nature.

4. *It accords with the perpetuity of that mercy.* O how often does that delightful sentence occur ; “His mercy endureth for ever !” Psalm cxviii, 1. Our salvation harmonizes with that mercy. Eternal salvation is obtained for us.

III. THAT SALVATION IS ATTENDED BY AN IMPORTANT CHANGE. “By the washing of regeneration.” This term is very important and expressive ; it is used to describe that inward and radical change which takes place in the human soul when it becomes the subject of salvation. This is variously represented, John iii. 3 ; by “born again,” Ephes. ii. 10 ; “created in Christ Jesus,” iv. 24 ; “created in righteousness,” &c., verse 23 ; “renewed in the spirit of your mind.” But nothing can be more expressive than *regeneration*, which implies a reproduction or a *new generation*. The soul in its essence and faculties remains the same ; but it has a new generation of perceptions, feelings, tendencies, and habits. This is called *washing*, perhaps in reference to baptism, which was an initiatory ordinance, to which all submitted who became proselytes to the christian religion ; or to signify that regeneration purifies the soul from moral pollution, as washing does the body from the “filth of the flesh.” We are saved “by the washing of regeneration,” that is, delivered from sin and all its tremendous consequences in the other world.

1. Delivered from the *love* of sinful pleasures and carnal delights, by having the “love of God shed abroad in our hearts.”

2. From the *guilt* of sinful practices, by having a knowledge of salvation by the remission of our sins.

3. From the *prevalence* of sinful habits, by the principles of holiness, and the power of the Divine Spirit.

4. From the *commission* of sinful acts, by the total regeneration of our natures. 1 John v. 18.

IV. THAT SALVATION IS ACCOMPLISHED BY A DIVINE INFLUENCE. "By the renewing of the Holy Ghost." All the influences of God upon the human soul are effected by the agency of the Holy Ghost.

1. The light and information which we receive on Divine subjects are communicated by the Holy Ghost. John xiv. 26 ; 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12 ; 1 John ii. 20.

2. The conviction we have of our personal danger is derived from the same source. John xvi. 8.

3. The change which is produced in the minds of christian believers is attributed to the Holy Ghost. John iii. 5—8 ; 1 Cor. vi. 11 ; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

4. The assurance of salvation is by the witness of the Holy Ghost. For this reason he is called the Comforter. John xiv. 16 ; Rom. viii. 16.

INFERENCES :—

1. How awful the delusion of those who depend on themselves or their works for salvation !

2. How deeply we are indebted to the Divine mercy for salvation ! Let us sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.

3. How indispensable is regeneration ! Salvation without it is impossible.

4. How deeply anxious should we be to secure the influences and agency of the Holy Ghost ! Luke xi. 13.

BETA.

XCIX. THE DAY OF GOD.

2 PETER iii. 12.

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

WE must either admit that there is a future state of retribution, or we presumptuously renounce the word of God as a "cunningly devised fable." Nothing can be more clearly revealed, than the

present responsibility of mankind, which necessarily involves our final destinies of rewards or punishments in the world to come. The comparative claims, therefore, of time and eternity, should deeply engage our attention, and suitably influence our conduct. But it is awfully manifest, that the great majority of the human race choose their portion in this life, and utterly neglect the salvation of their souls. They love the world, and seek no other good. But the followers of Christ are taught to pass through temporal vanities, *looking* to eternal realities. Their immortal spirits soar above terrestrial objects, dart through the contracted limits of time, penetrate the blissful regions of futurity, and grasp, by faith, the ineffable felicities of the paradise of God. With such believing views, and cheering prospects, they joyfully pursue their christian course; "*Looking for*, and *hastening unto*," &c. In considering these impressive words, let us observe,

I. THE SOLEMN EVENT WE SHOULD ANTICIPATE. "The day of God, wherein," &c. There can be no doubt but these words refer to the final dissolution of nature, or the general conflagration of the world. This is frequently called in Scripture, that day, the great day, the day of the Lord, the day of God, &c. It will be a day of *perdition* to the ungodly, verse 7; and a day of *full redemption* to the righteous, Rom. viii. 23; a day of *revelation*, when all secrets will be made manifest, Rom. ii. 16. The day of *judgment*, when all men will be rewarded according to their works, 2 Cor. v. 10. That all-important period will be *pre-eminently the day of God*.

1. *The day of his glory*. He will then more *visibly* reveal his glory to mankind. The glorious "Judge of quick and dead shall come with clouds, and every eye shall see him." The majestic splendour of his person, attendants, and appearing, will infinitely exceed all possible description, or comparison. "The Son of Man will come in his glory, with his holy angels, sitting upon the throne of his glory; and all nations shall be gathered before him," when the *glory* of the Lord shall be revealed.—What an awfully grand and magnificent sight! How dreadful to the sinner! how blissful to the believer! Matt. xxv. 34, and 41; Col, iii. 4.

2. *The day of his power*. Nothing is impossible with Omnipotence. By *his power* all things were brought into ex-

istence, and he *sustains* the works of his hands. All worlds are suspended on his omnipotent arm, and are governed by his sovereign sway. By his *resistless power* time will soon cease to roll,—the dead shall rise and come to judgment,—death and the grave shall be destroyed,—the heavens shall be *dissolved* or decomposed,—the elements shall be melted down with fervent heat,—the earth also shall be burnt up, and there shall be “new heavens and a new earth,” &c. “Who then can resist his will?”

3. *The day of his wrath.* The present is the day of his *grace*; “behold, now is the day of salvation.” Now God offers *mercy* to the vilest sinners, and is “long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.” But soon the day of grace will be succeeded by everlasting punishment to the finally impenitent. To such, Christ will appear in “flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God,” &c., 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. Then mercy will be impossible, and God will justly punish his enemies.—Dreadful portion! “When the great day of his wrath is come, who shall be able to stand?” Rev. vi. 16, and xx. 11—15. Let us then *seriously reflect* on this awful event, and duly consider,

II. THE PRACTICAL INFLUENCE IT SHOULD PRODUCE. “*Looking for and hasting unto,*” &c. This language is expressive of the manner in which the primitive Christians anticipated Christ’s future advent; and is justly descriptive of the way in which all his followers should regard his second appearing.

1. *It should duly interest our minds.* We must be *looking* for it. This implies *believing expectation* and *deep attention*. We should fully credit the fact of the dissolution of the visible globe. Infidels may ask “Where is the promise of his coming?” But Christians *know* that he *will* come. We should frequently contemplate the awful catastrophe of the burning world, with all its important consequences to mankind. Our minds should be *piously* impressed with the constant *anticipation* of the dread solemnities of the *day of God*, when “the globe, and all that it inherits, shall dissolve, and leave not a wreck behind.” Matt. xxiv. 44.

2. *It should duly influence our conduct.* “Looking for and hasting unto the day of God,” comprehends *earnest desire* and

diligent preparation. To the sinner it wears an aspect the most distressing ; but to the Christian it is an object truly desirable, Mal. iii. 17, 18. A *due consideration* of the last day of decision, will lead us to “gird up the loins of our minds,”—live by faith, and prepare to meet the Lord. “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness ?” verse 14 ; Eccles. ix. 10. We must now proceed to consider the conflagration of the mundane system, in reference to,

III. THE IMPORTANT REFLECTIONS IT SHOULD SUGGEST. The destruction of the universe will be an event the most tremendous ; nor can any of us escape the solemn scene. We must *all* witness the dissolving world, the burning earth, and the crashing elements ! Let us then now stand and pause, that we may devoutly reflect on,

1. *The awful nature and effects of sin.* Not only must the sinner be punished for his iniquities, but even the world itself is doomed to destruction in consequence of his crimes. What has sin not done ! Misery and death are in all its ways. It has *destroyed* angels,—*dishonoured* God,—*defiled* the world,—and *ruined* man. If the heavens, the earth and the elements must perish, as the unconscious instruments of transgression ; what must be the punishment inflicted on the *transgressor* ? It is surely “an evil thing, and bitter, to sin against the Lord,” Rom. vi. 21.

2. *The emptiness and vanity of the world.* It is a mere bubble,—a *rain show*. It already begins to dissolve, and is rapidly passing away. In its most perfect state it is full of “vanity and vexation of spirit.” *Vanity* is deeply inscribed on every thing worldly and finite. Honour is vain ! wealth is vain ! pleasure is vain ! “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” What a *fascinating* delusion ! What an empty, perishing universe of *shadows* and *trifles* ! Let us take warning, and “love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” 1 John ii. 15 —17 ; Col. iii. 2.

3. *The necessity of seeking an interest in Christ.* The Lamb of God is the sinner's only refuge. He is the rock of ages. Into this rock the vilest may enter and be safe. Flee then from the wrath to come. Embrace the Saviour

by *faith*; and safely lodged in him, the believer will survive the ruins of the world, and triumphantly “enter into the joy of the Lord.”

ETA.

C. GROWING IN GRACE.

2 PETER iii. 18.

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever, Amen.”

ONE of the most pleasing traits in the character of a genuine Christian pastor, is his generous disinterested concern for the present and everlasting welfare of those whom the chief Shepherd has committed to his care. And it is peculiarly delightful to find the same disposition operating with unabated vigour, amidst an almost endless variety of cares and troubles, and after many years of separation have elapsed. This heavenly temper is more or less observable in all the epistles of the New Testament. Hear Paul's declaration to the Thessalonians, “For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.” Hear also how he felt, and how he prayed for the Ephesians: see chapter iii. 13—19. In the same spirit, Peter also endeavours to guard his Christian converts against the principles and practices of infidels and scoffers, by pressing on their attention the importance of activity and perseverance in the great business of the soul's salvation; “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence,” &c., chap. i. 10—13. And in conclusion he says, “But grow in grace,” &c. This is a subject to be *explained*, *recommended*, and *practised*. We therefore inquire,

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY GROWING IN GRACE? The word grace means favour, kindness, friendly affection. Hence the phrase, so common in Scripture, of finding grace in the eyes or sight of a person, Gen. xxxiv. 11; 2 Sam. xvi. 4; Esther ii. 17. And hence, as it respects God, we are said to be “justified freely by his grace,” Rom. iii. 24. But the word is also variously applied to the operations and effects of this free favour.

We at present consider it in two senses. First, As it expresses that state or condition of adoption and reconciliation into which believers are brought, Romans v. 1, 2,—And secondly, as it denotes Divine assistance, afforded “in time of need,” 2 Cor. xii. 9; through which the believer is “strengthened with might by the Spirit, in the inner man.” Eph. iii. 16. Here we must be indulged in a few remarks.

1. This state of reconciliation, &c., is not that of mankind in general; but is contra-distinguished from a state of *nature*, in which evil principles produce works of wickedness, which, as well as the workers of them, “God’s soul hateth,” Ps. xi. 5. “By nature we are children of wrath,” Eph. ii. 3: “and God is *angry* with the wicked,” &c. Ps. vii. 11; Isaiah xii. 1—3.

2. Wherever there is that *relative* change, by which a penitent is adopted into the family of God, there is also a *real* change in the man’s principles and practice; a change of *nature* as well as of condition. Indeed, the real change which begins in repentance, whereby we sorrow for, hate, and forsake sin, precedes that faith whereby we believe with the heart unto righteousness:—and which farther purifies the heart. Matt. iv. 17; Acts xx. 21. Yet,

3. The change is not so complete as not to admit of improvement; therefore the text says, “Grow in grace.” As grace means free favour, this may refer to an advancement in the favour of God. God loves and must love holiness. It is his own nature; and the more of it any person has, with the greater complacency does God regard him. He calls Abraham his friend: and John was “the disciple whom Jesus (peculiarly) loved.” But the principle idea intended to be conveyed, seems to be that of improvement. Illustrate by the example of “little children,” &c., John i.; Eph. i. 12—14. The growth here enjoined may well include, and must consist with, 1. An improvement in knowledge;—“the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” that ye may be freed from the mistakes, confusion, and imbecility of infancy; and that your views of his *person* and *work*, and of your Christian privileges, may be more *correct*, Eph. iv. 13, 14;—more clear, chapter i. 17—19. and more comprehensive, chapter iii. 14—19. This will be attended with, 2. A corresponding improvement in *strength*;—

from childhood,—to youth,—to maturity. “The righteous shall be stronger and stronger,” Job xvii. 9. And 3. An improvement in *usefulness*,—that, in uniting in yourselves the experience, firmness, prudence, &c. of mature age, with parental solicitude, ye may be nursing fathers to the church, and “mothers in Israel.” With a view to recommend the subject, we inquire,

II. WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GROWING IN GRACE ?
The improvement is,

1. A *personal* advantage. The Christian’s life is, in a great measure, made up of doing and suffering. An increase of grace will enable him to *do* the will of God more easily, and more effectually, Col. i. 9, 10; and to *suffer* it more patiently and cheerfully, verse 11. It is,

2. A *social* advantage. Society will be so far preserved from the baleful effects of error, inconsistency, &c. And many good things will be done and *well done*, in the world, the church, the family, &c., which would otherwise be left undone. Phil. i. 9—

11. Hence it is,

3. An advantage to the *cause of religion*. There is a pathos in the address, and an energy in the pious actions of an eminently holy and thriving soul, that can hardly fail to take effect.

4. It will advance *the glory of God*. It is he, who, through Jesus Christ, bestows grace whereby we serve him acceptably; and “serve our generation” according to his will; and *endure* as seeing the invisible, Matt. v. 13—16. Wherefore to him, as the *Origin* of good, and according to the apostle’s wish, to “our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as *Mediator*, be glory, both now and for ever.” Amen.

But this is a subject to be reduced to practice. It remains, therefore, that we enquire,

III. WHAT ARE THE MEANS OF GROWING IN GRACE ? On this subject we may avail ourselves of what experience teaches us concerning the means which conduce to bodily health and improvement : among which are, proper care,—proper nutriment,—and proper exercise.

1. *Proper care*. This is so necessary, that before your children are capable of taking care of themselves, you anxiously keep them out of the way of harm. Observe, here, Paul’s solicitude; “As a nurse cherisheth her children,” &c., “*warning* every

man;" we "*charged* every one of you," &c.; 1 Thess. ii. 7—11; Col. i. 28. And when we reach the years of discretion, we still find it necessary to guard against pestilential effluvia, accidental injuries, destructive practices, &c. So should we, in spirituals, avoid the pestilential atmosphere of the wicked; "take heed, lest we fall;" flee youthful lusts which war against the soul," &c. 1 Cor. xv. 33; Prov. iv.

2. Proper *nutriment*; rejecting, of course, what is useless, and more especially, whatever is deleterious. Much of what is useless, and much of what is poisonous, is to be met with both in *conversation* and in *print*. Reject it; and seek that which will afford nourishment:—in 1. Hearing and reading *the Word*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. 2. Biography of persons whose pious life and happy death have exemplified the truth of Scripture. 3. *Christian conversation*. 4. *Prayer*; and, in fine, every appointed or prudential means of grace.

3. Proper *exercise*. Without this, the most robust body will sink rapidly into the hands of the physician; and through them into the grave. So, "health of mind is exercise; not rest." By reason of *use*, our senses are exercised to discern both good and evil, Heb. v. 13, 14. See also Matt. xiii. 12; Luke xix. 20—26. Have you a measure of faith, love, humility, patience? &c. *Use* grace, and *have* grace.

Remind the sinner of the awfulness of his case. "The *wrath* of God is revealed, &c., and it *abideth on him*." Rom. i. 18; John iii. 36; 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

Let the *feeble-minded* remember, that grace admits of growth. "Who hath despised the day of small things?" Isa. xl. 11; Heb. iv. 15, 16.

On *adult* believers the necessity of a farther growth should be urged,—to prevent *apostacy*, chapter i. 1—9, and iii. 17; to prevent *perdition*, chapter ii. 20; John xv. 6. And they may be *encouraged* by the hope of "an entrance, ministered unto them abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," chapter i. 10, 11.

ZETA.

END OF FIRST VOLUME.

